星野之宣

原作 J.P.ホーガン

星を継ぐもの

J.P.HOGAN × YUKINOBU HOSHINO

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BIG COMICS SPECIAL

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

01

星を継ぐもの 01

原作 J.P.ホーガン

星野之宣

小学館

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西暦205X年――安価で無尽蔵のエネルギーが普及した地球からは
紛争と、戦争が激減。人々は平和で安定した生活を享受していた。
だが月面で、宇宙服をまとった5万年も前の遺体が発見され……!?

ビッグコミック
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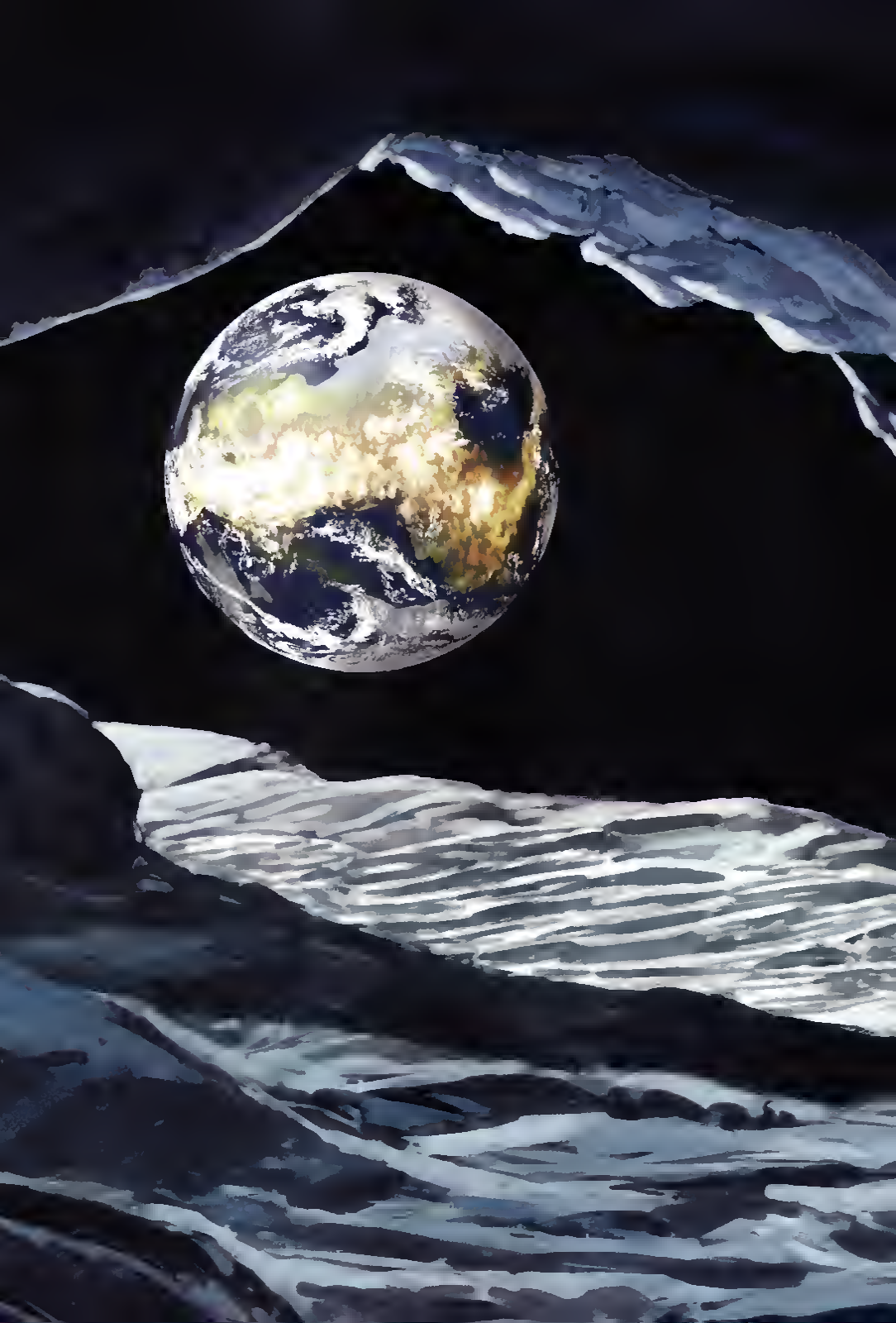
01
BIG COMICS SPECIAL

生き物の森へ

星野 仁



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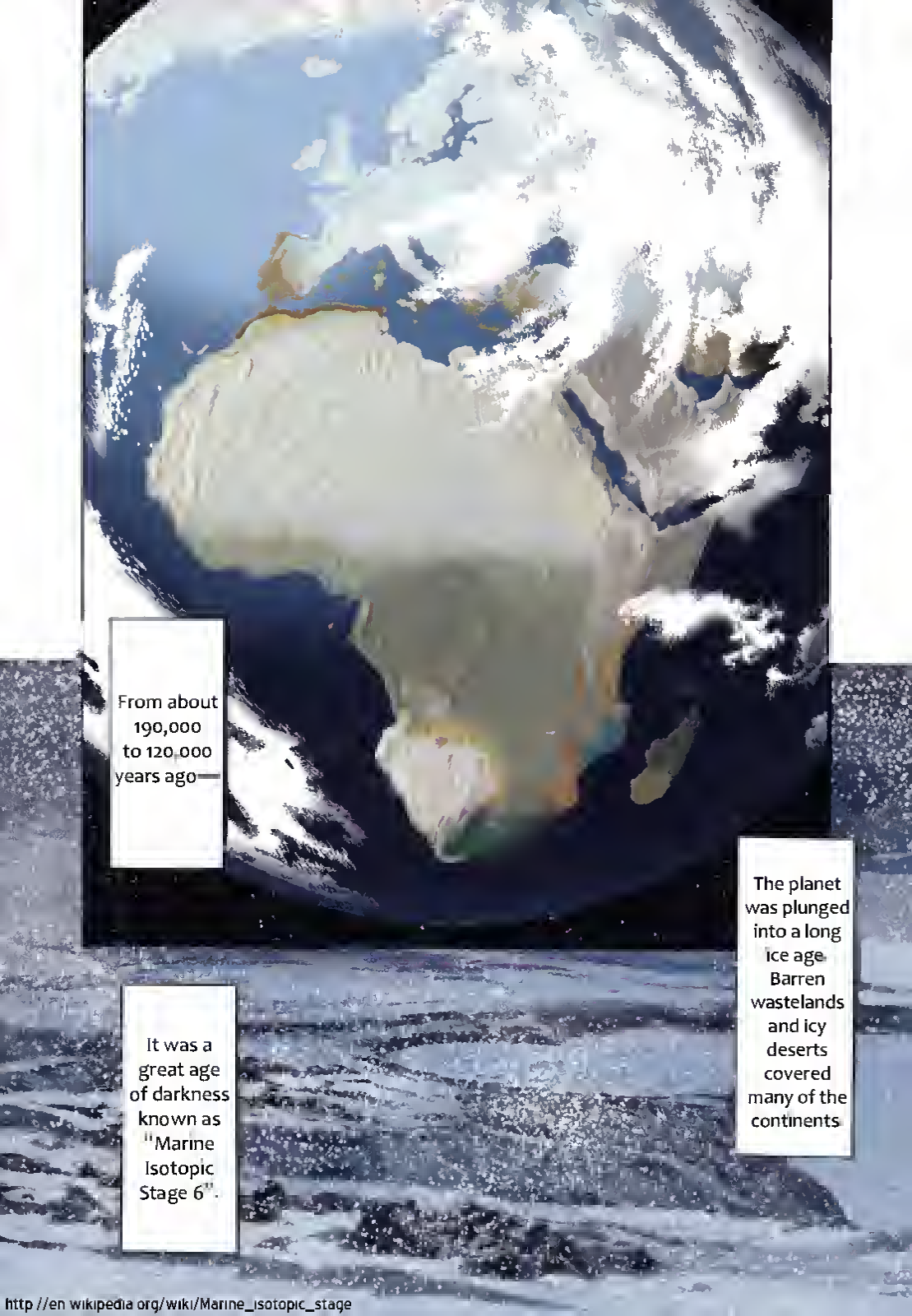
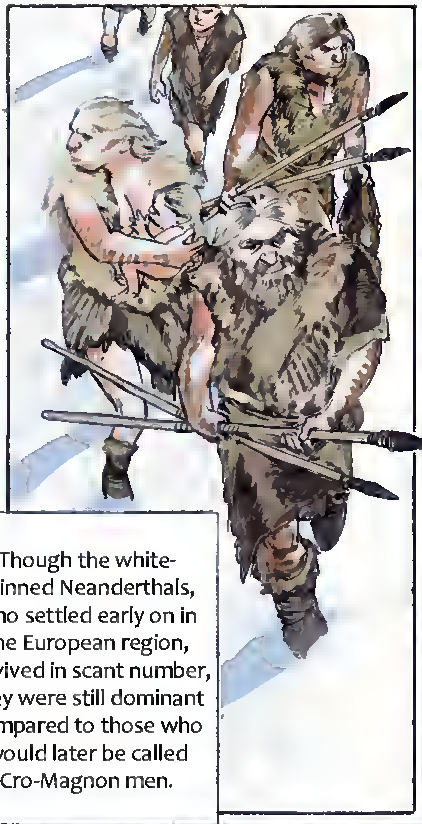
Chapter 1 ...
The Corpse in the Moon


From about 190,000 to 120,000 years ago
It was a great age of darkness known as "Marine Isotopic Stage 6".
The planet was plunged into a long ice age. Barren wastelands and icy deserts covered many of the continents.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_isotopic_stage



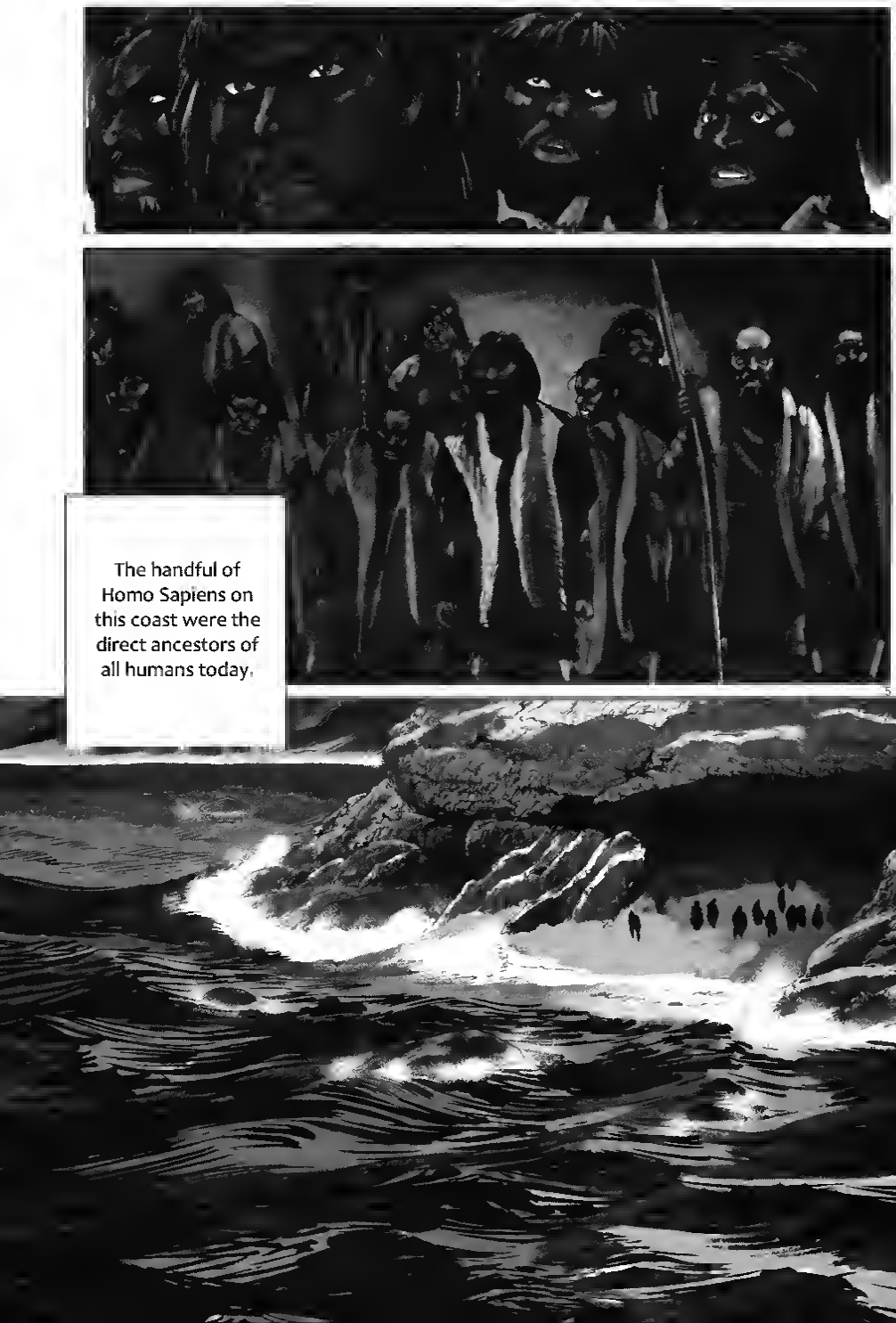
Though the white-skinned Neanderthals, who settled early on in the European region, survived in scant number, they were still dominant compared to those who would later be called Cro-Magnon men.

With food scarce, yet hindered by a severe environment and unable to roam, animals had but to endure.

Neither did primitive man have the power to change their environment.

The dark-skinned Cro-Magnon men, who previously spread throughout their homeland of Africa, were nearly wiped out due to the climate change. Only a group living in caves at the southern tip of Africa have left evidence of ekeing out their survival, eating shellfish, tubers and the like.

They had been pushed to the verge of extinction.
It is estimated that this group, who must once have numbered some 10,000 strong, was down to a slight few hundred.


The handful of Homo Sapiens on this coast were the direct ancestors of all humans today.

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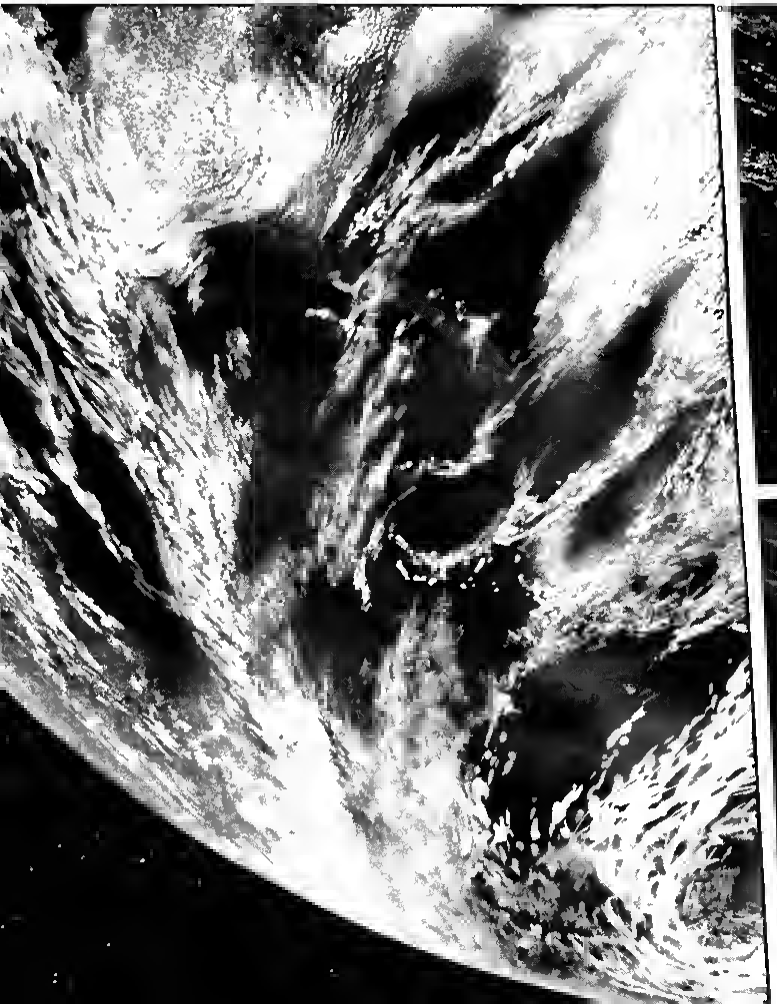
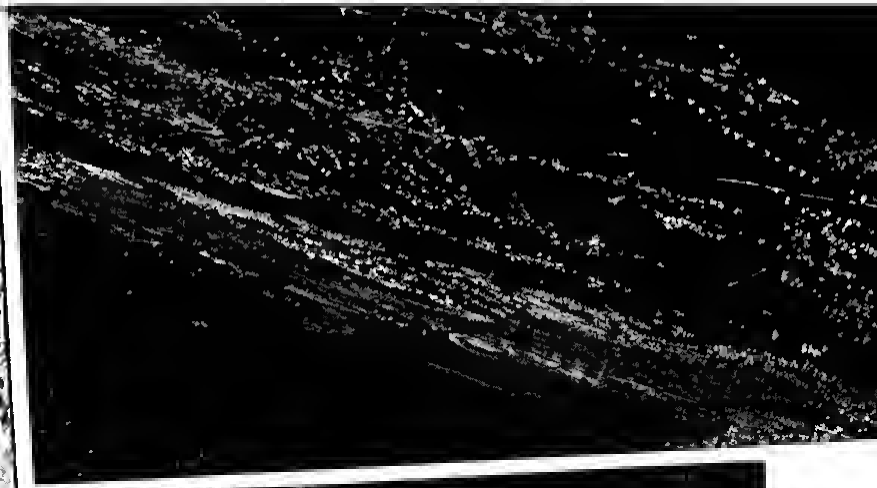
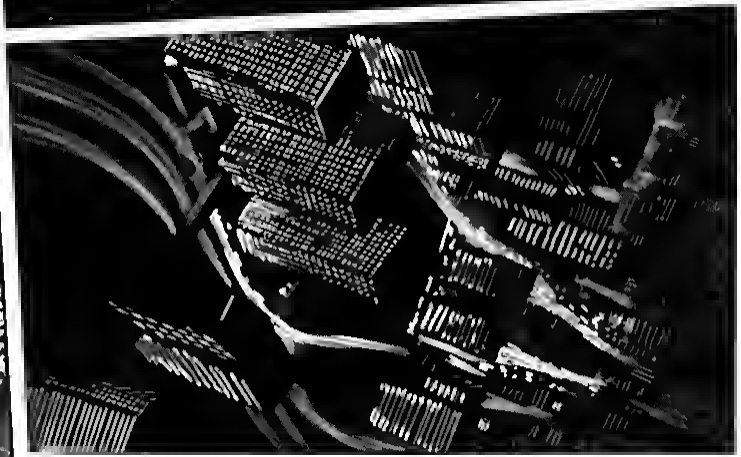
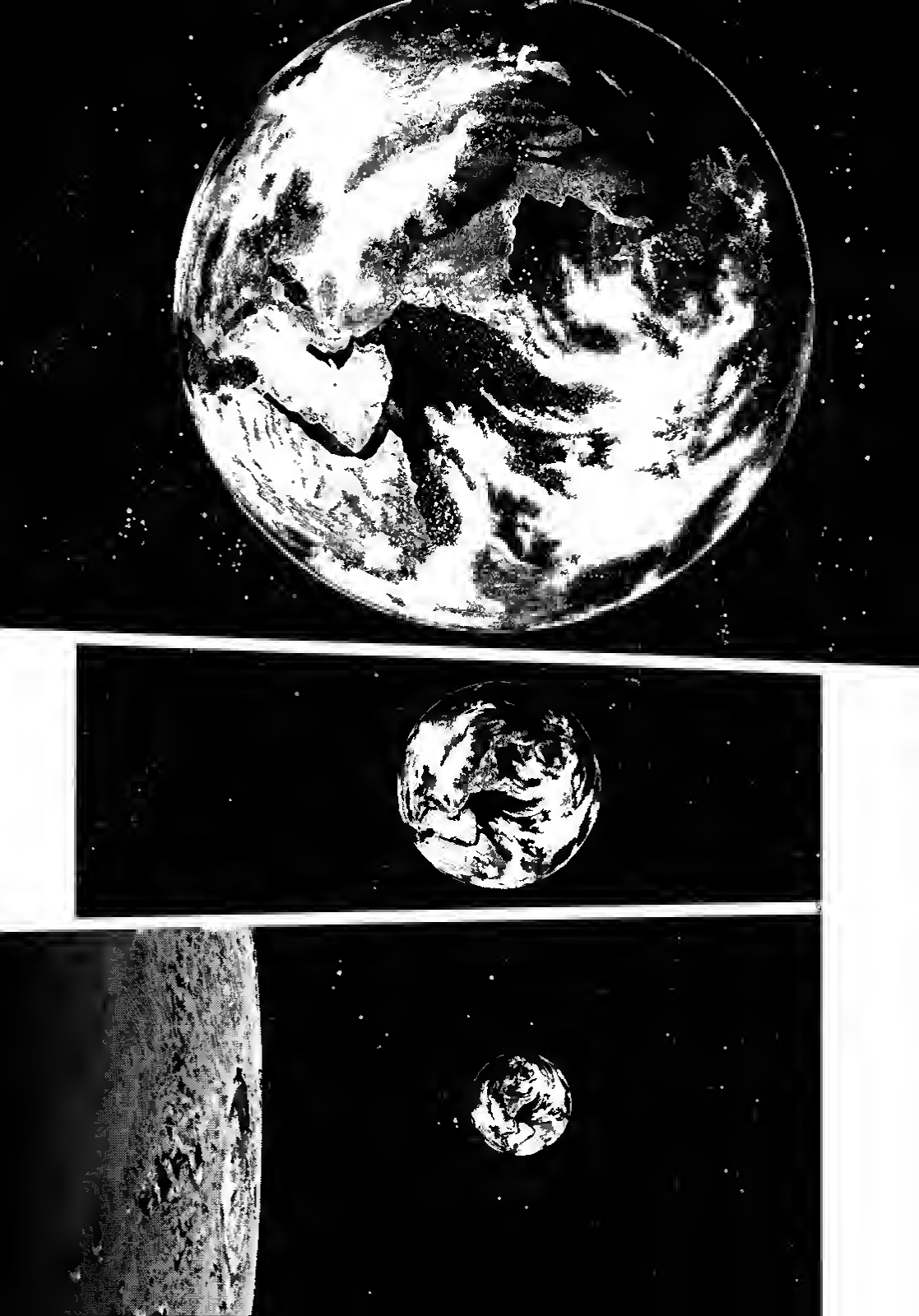
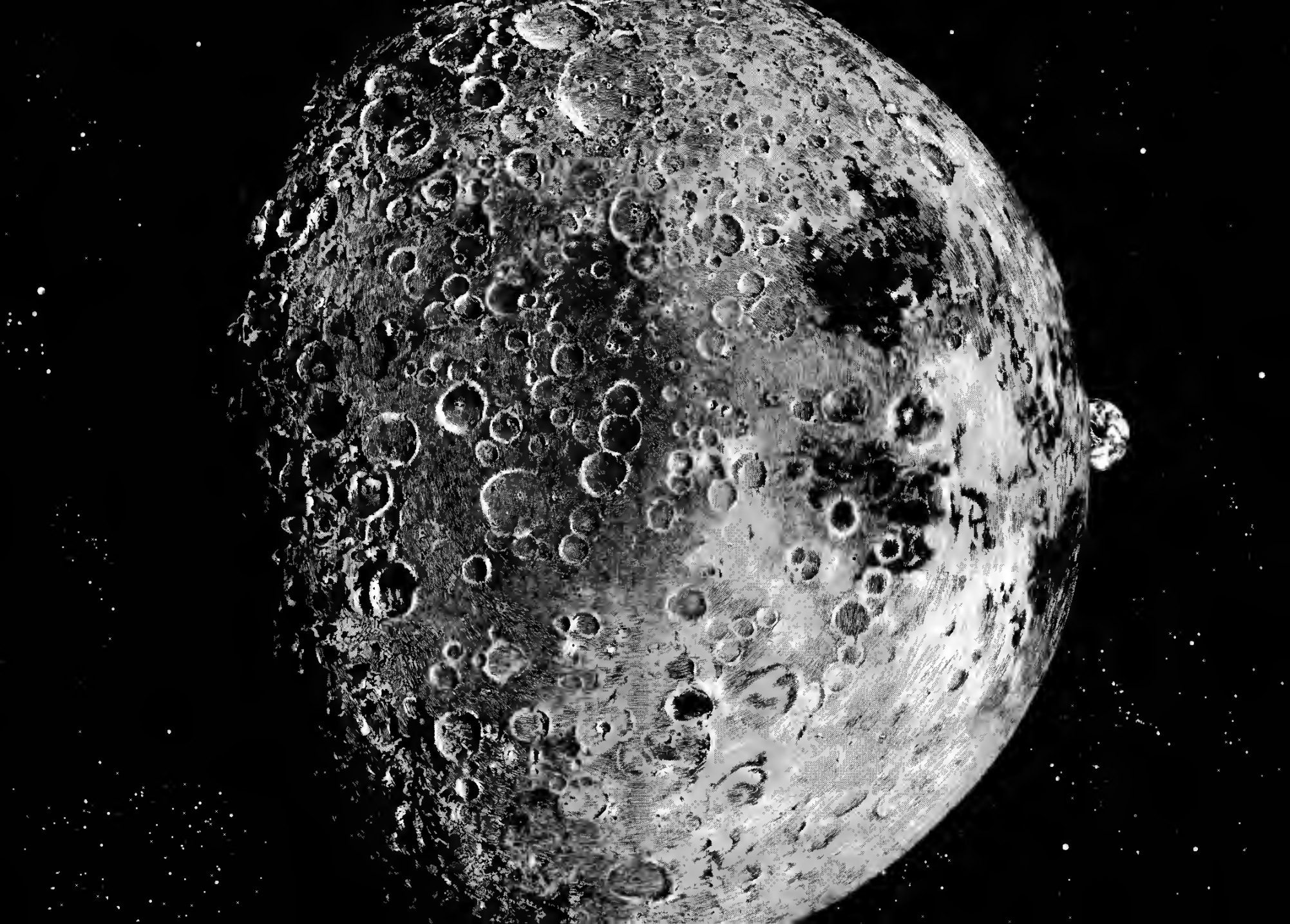
Translation methanol
Editing Nitouryu
Quality Check xyz85-mvb9
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@irc.irchighway.net



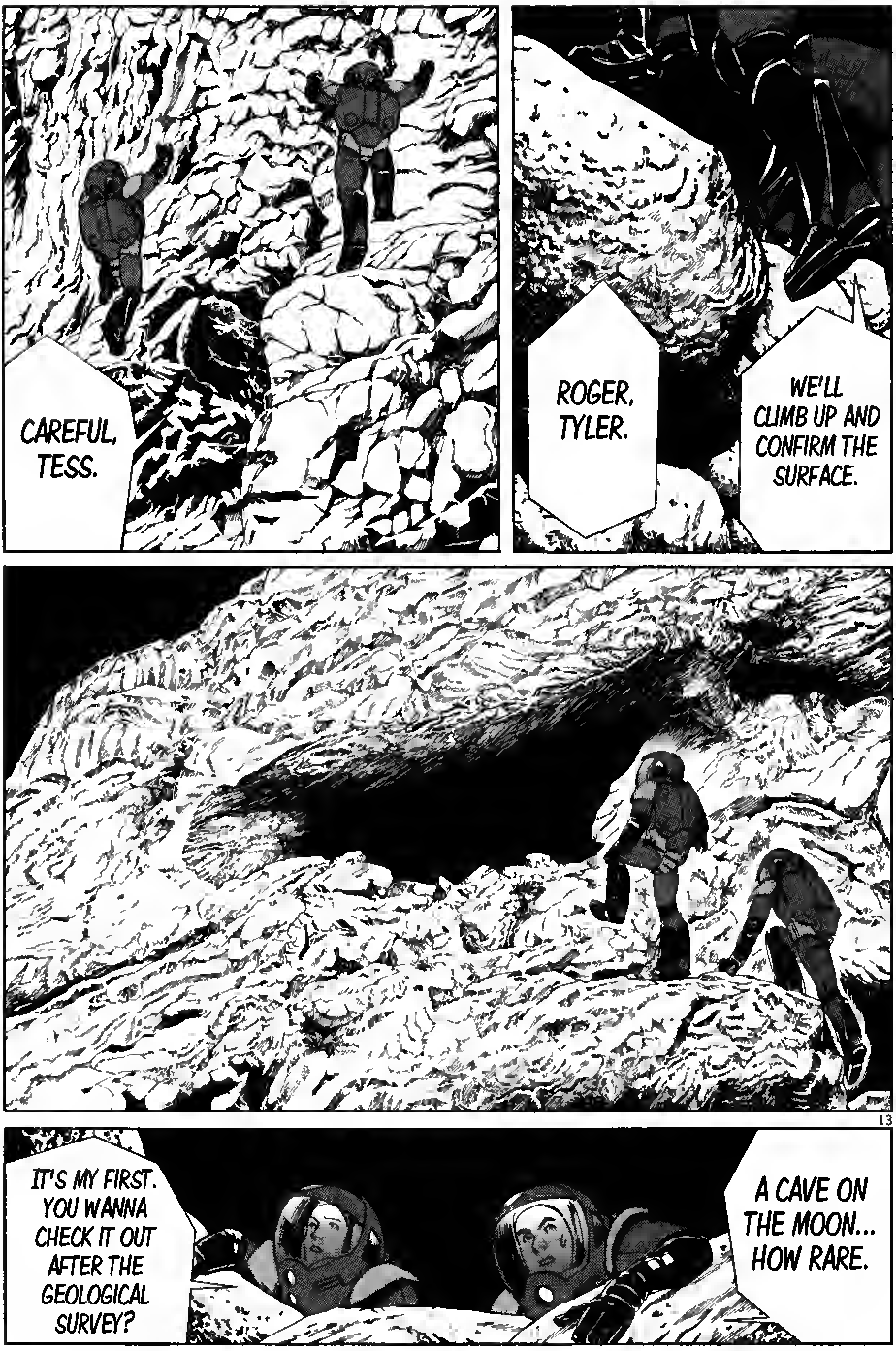






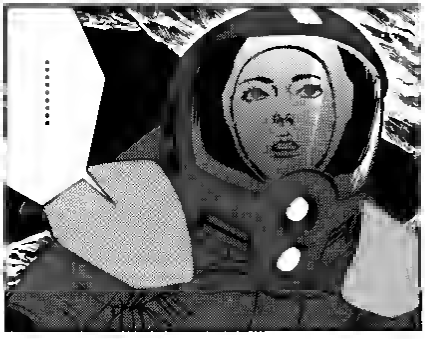


COPERNICUS 3.
THIS IS TYLER.
WE'VE ARRIVED AT
THE RADAR FACILITY
CANDIDATE AREA K2.


CAREFUL, TESS.
ROGER, TYLER.
WE'LL CLIMB UP AND CONFIRM THE SURFACE.
13
IT'S MY FIRST. YOU WANNA CHECK IT OUT AFTER THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY?
A CAVE ON THE MOON... HOW RARE.

WAIT. I SEE SOMETHING RED BACK THERE.

IT LOOKS LIKE THERE WERE A FEW CAVE-INS. IT MIGHT BE DANGEROUS.


.....

*United Nations Space Army

INDEED IT IS. IT'S HOT OUT.
I'M LYN GARLAND, SECRETARY TO NAVIGATION COMMS DIVISION CHIEF CALDWELL. FIRST TIME IN NEW YORK?
THE FORMER AMERICAN MILITARY REBORN AS A SPACE EXPLORATION ORGANIZATION. I ALMOST CAN'T BELIEVE THE CHANGES OVER THE PAST TWENTY, THIRTY YEARS.
HMM?
WELL, I'LL BE.

WHEN THE LIVES OF ALL MANKIND, ALL TEN BILLION, BECAME STABLE, WAR AND MILITARIES VANISHED.
IT SEEMS THE SPREAD OF CHEAP, LIMITLESS ENERGY, LEADING TO THE GLOBAL END OF ECONOMIC CONCERNS IN THE 2030'S WAS A LARGE FACTOR.

19

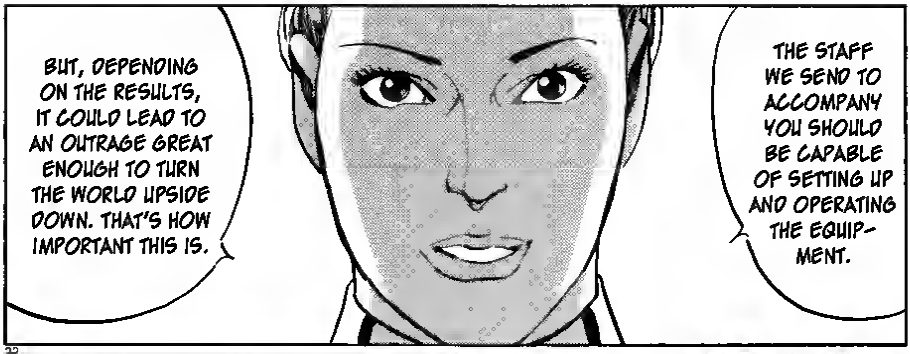
WHATEVER THE CAUSE, I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL THAT ARMAMENTS SUCH AS ICBMS HAVE BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY DECOMMISSIONED, AND THE LEFTOVER BUDGET AND HUMAN RESOURCES HAVE BEEN SHIFTED TO THE SPACE ARMY.

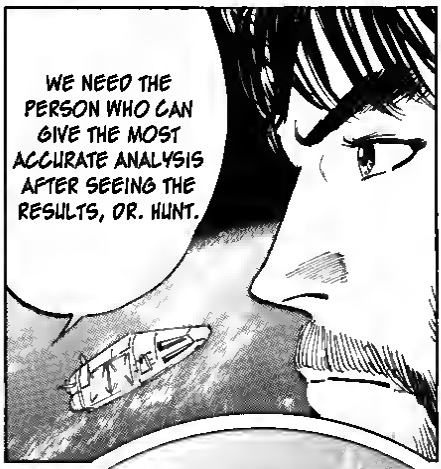
THOUGH THE CHANGES DO SEEM A LITTLE BIT HASTY, IF YOU ASK ME.

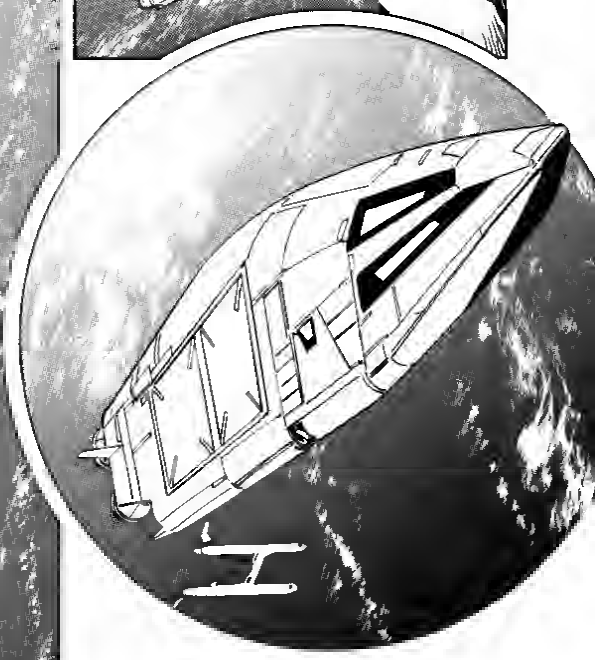
ALTHOUGH RUMOR HAS IT THAT THE REAL CAUSE WAS THE "INTERNATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE", FOUNDED BY THE UN, WHICH WENT ON A SPENDING SPREE BUYING UP ALL THE WORLD'S WEAPONS...

AND FOR THESE PAST SEVERAL YEARS YOU WERE THE ONE AND ONLY MEMBER OF THE "THEORETICAL RESEARCH DEPT." AT METADYNE CORP. HOBBIES INCLUDE ROCK CLIMBING...
AFTER COMPLETING YOUR STUDY OF NUCLEAR PHYSICS AT CAMBRIDGE, YOU BOUNCED AROUND FROM GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY UNABLE TO SETTLE DOWN...
IS THIS SOME KIND OF INTERVIEW?
CAN'T YOU STAND TO AGREE WITH ANYONE, DR. VICTOR HUNT?
AS FOR METADYNE, I BELIEVE THEY'RE ONLY PROFITING FROM THE EQUIPMENT I DESIGNED.
I LISTEN TO OTHERS' OPINIONS, SURE. I JUST DON'T HAVE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THEM.
I REALLY DON'T THINK I'M SO OOO.

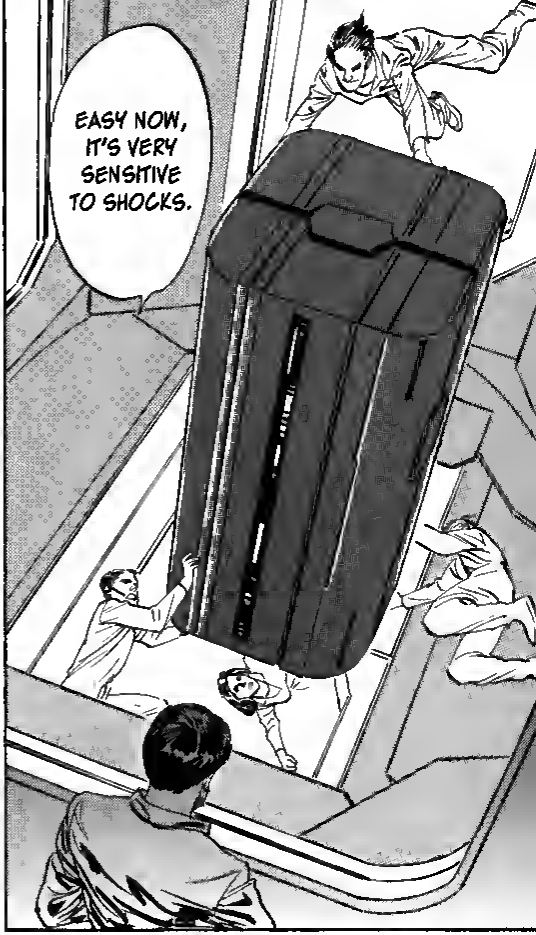
WE'VE INVITED YOU HERE FROM ENGLAND BECAUSE WE HAVE AN URGENT NEED FOR YOUR MACHINE.
THE "TRIMAGNI-SCOPE".
USING A NEUTRINO BEAM YOU GET A TRANSPARENT 3D VIEW OF THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF AN OBJECT—
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ALL THE WAY TO THE MOON?
21
IN OTHER WORDS— THE OBJECT YOU WANT TO SEE THROUGH IS ON THE MOON...?
THE MOON!?

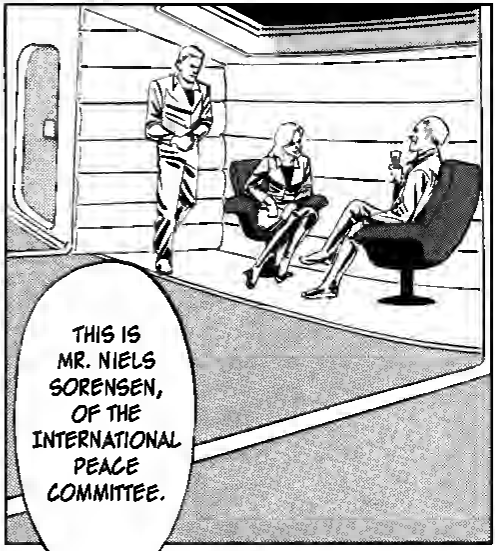

THE STAFF WE SEND TO ACCOMPANY YOU SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF SETTING UP AND OPERATING THE EQUIP-MENT.
BUT, DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS, IT COULD LEAD TO AN OUTRAGE GREAT ENOUGH TO TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN. THAT'S HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS.


WE NEED THE PERSON WHO CAN GIVE THE MOST ACCURATE ANALYSIS AFTER SEEING THE RESULTS, DR. HUNT.

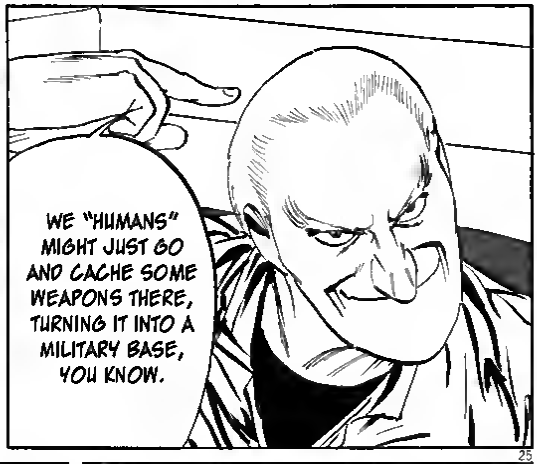


DR. HUNT, SOME PEOPLE WILL BE BOARDING THE MOON SHUTTLE WITH YOU. LET ME INTRODUCE THEM.


EASY NOW, IT'S VERY SENSITIVE TO SHOCKS.

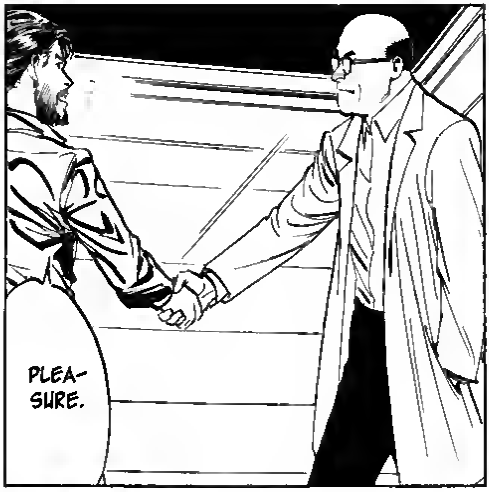

THIS IS MR. NIELS SORENSEN, OF THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE.

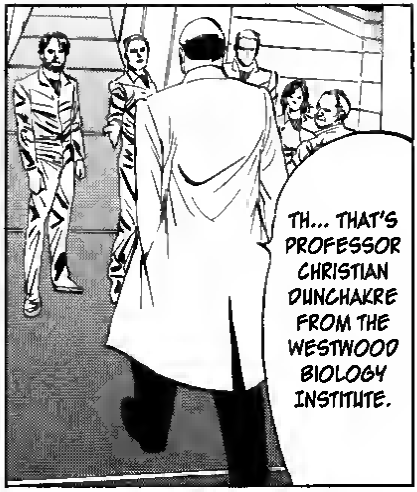
IT'S PART OF MY JOB, YOU SEE. INSPECTIONS OF THE LUNAR BASES.
I NEVER EXPECTED TO MEET ANYONE FROM THE IPC HERE...

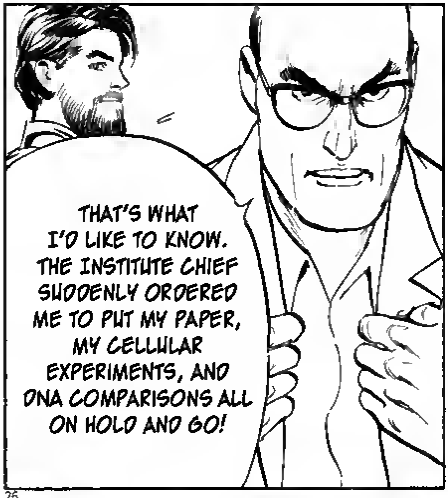

WE "HUMANS" MIGHT JUST GO AND CACHE SOME WEAPONS THERE, TURNING IT INTO A MILITARY BASE, YOU KNOW.

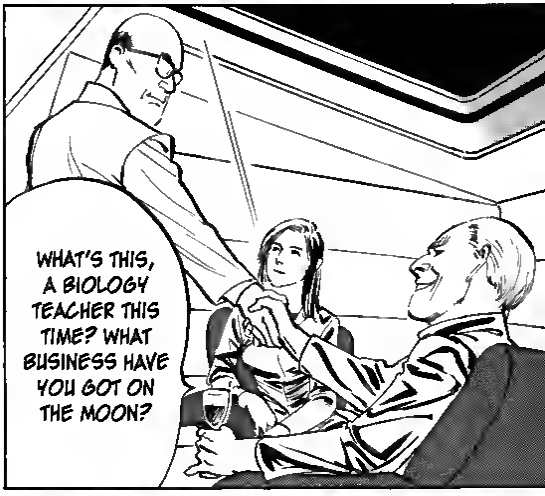
PRO-FESSOR, THIS IS REGULA-TION—
AND YOU CAN JUST FORGET ABOUT STICKING ME IN ANOTHER DAMNED OSTRICH EGG SEAT!

THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL YOU'RE GONNA GET ME INTO THAT STUFFY OUTFIT!

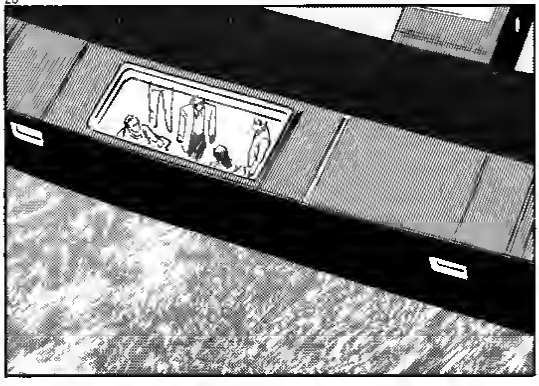

PLEA-
SURE.

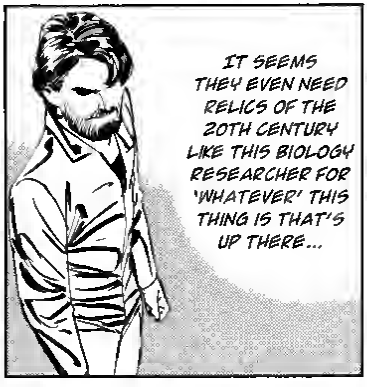

TH... THAT'S PROFESSOR CHRISTIAN DUNCHAKRE FROM THE WESTWOOD BIOLOGY INSTITUTE.


THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW. THE INSTITUTE CHIEF SUDDENLY ORDERED ME TO PUT MY PAPER, MY CELLULAR EXPERIMENTS, AND DNA COMPARISONS ALL ON HOLD AND GO!

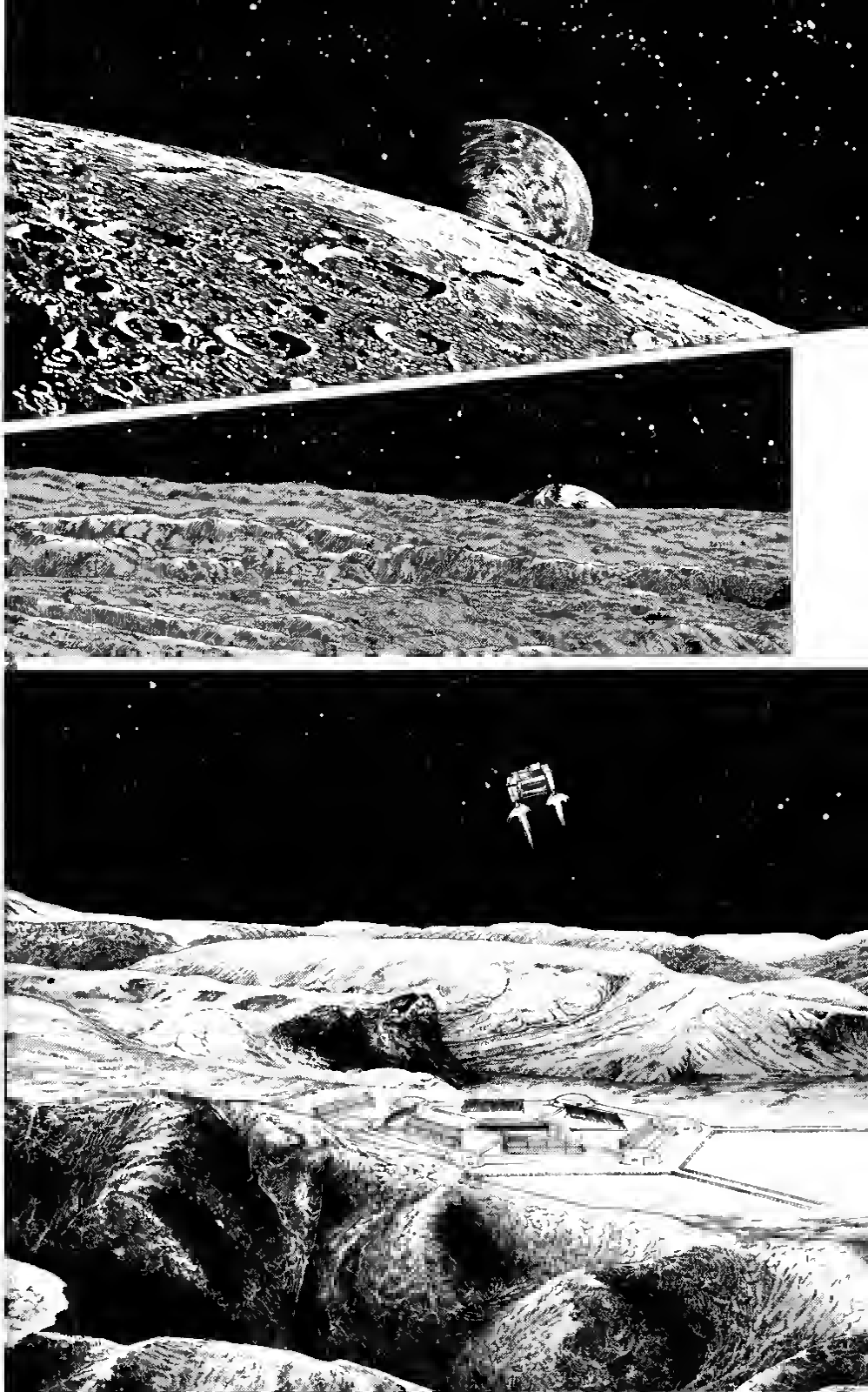

WHAT'S THIS, A BIOLOGY TEACHER THIS TIME? WHAT BUSINESS HAVE YOU GOT ON THE MOON?

26

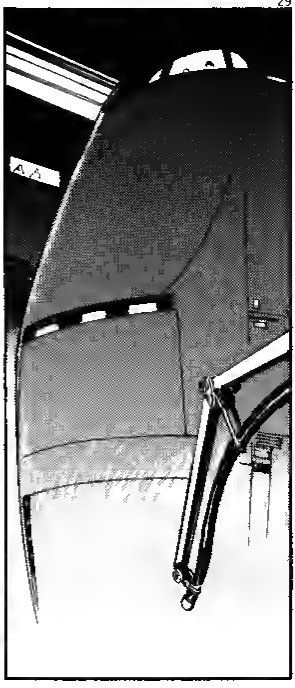



IT SEEMS THEY EVEN NEED RELICS OF THE 20TH CENTURY LIKE THIS BIOLOGY RESEARCHER FOR 'WHATEVER' THIS THING IS THAT'S UP THERE...

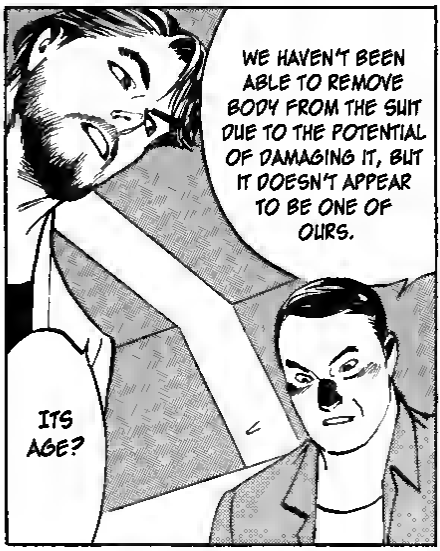
THE COPERNICUS 3 BASE IS LOCATED RIGHT ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES OF THE MOON. AND ITS MISSION IS TO SURVEY TERRAIN AND NATURAL RESOURCES
IT TAKES ROUGHLY THIRTY HOURS UNTIL ARRIVAL



WELCOME TO COPERNICUS 3...



IT WAS NOT OUR INTENTION TO HIDE IT FROM YOU, CHAIRMAN SORENSEN. IT WAS THE SPACE ARMY'S DECISION THAT WE ANNOUNCE IT ONLY AFTER THE DETAILS BECAME CLEAR——
30
THE FORMER MILITARY TRIED TO HANDLE EVERYTHING IN SECRET AND MONOPOLIZE INFORMATION. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF THE SPACE ARMY IN ITS CURRENT FORM TURNED OUT THE SAME.
THIS WAY.
WELL, HOW ABOUT WE HAVE A LOOK AT IT FIRST? WE CAN ARGUE ABOUT IT LATER.


WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO REMOVE BODY FROM THE SUIT DUE TO THE POTENTIAL OF DAMAGING IT, BUT IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ONE OF OURS.
ITS AGE?

...IS IT DEAD? A WORKER FROM SOME BASE OR ANOTHER?

WE HAVE DATED THE CORPSE TO ROUGHLY 50,000 YEARS OLD.
.....
50,000 YEARS...!?
F... FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS OLD? JUST HOW DID IT GET HERE ON THE MOON?
AND... WHO IS IT!?

Chapter 2 ...
Up in Smoke

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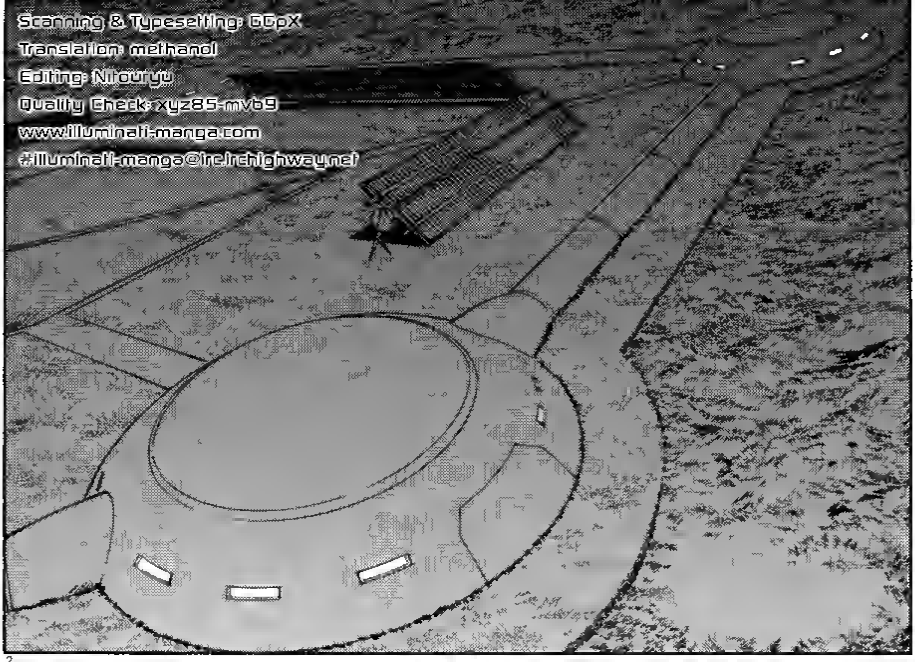
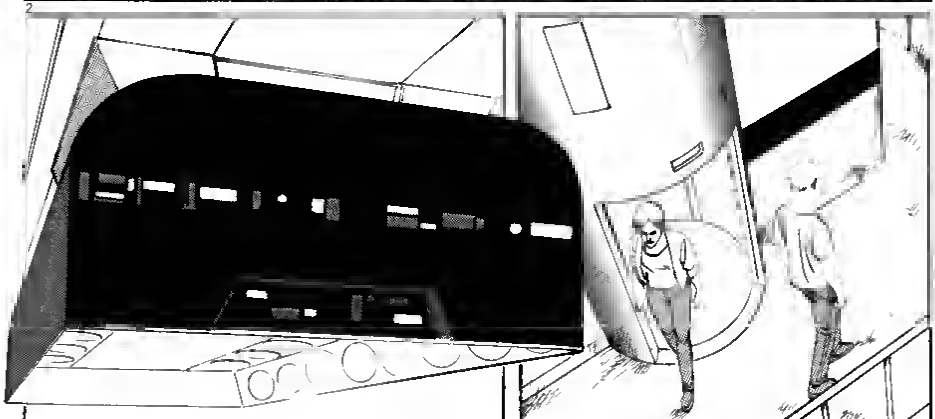
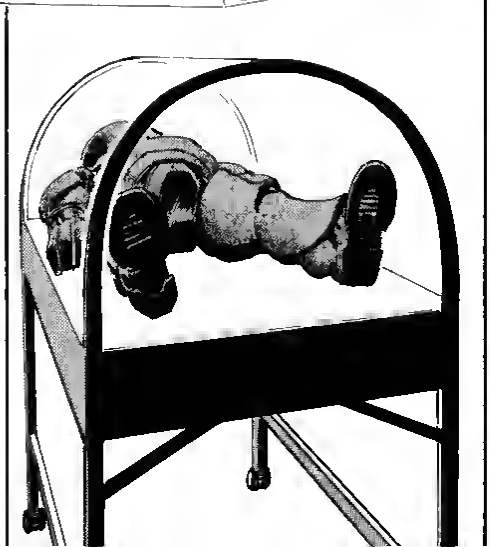
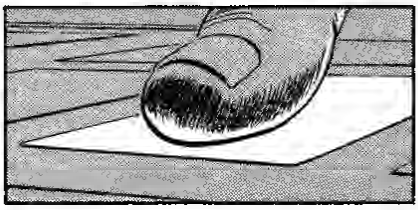
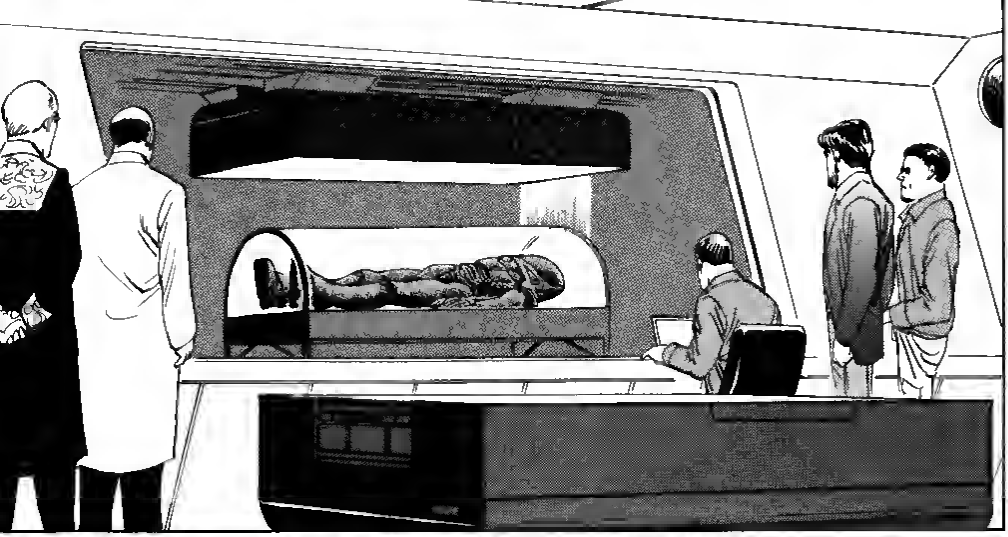
Translation: methanol
Editing: Niouryu
Quality Check: xyz85-mv69
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@irelichighway.net

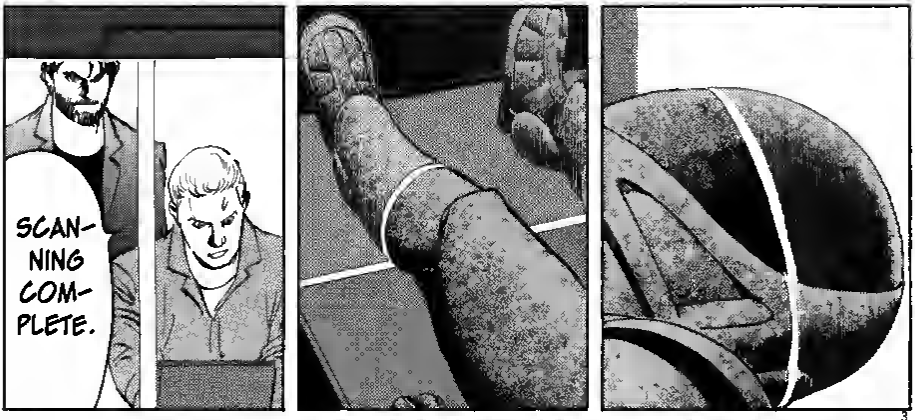


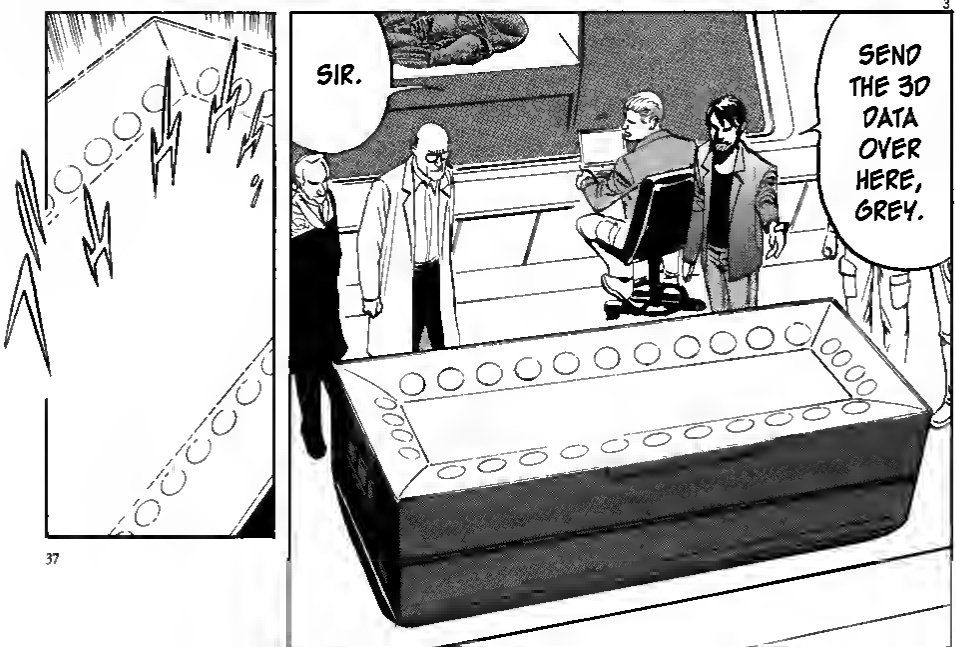




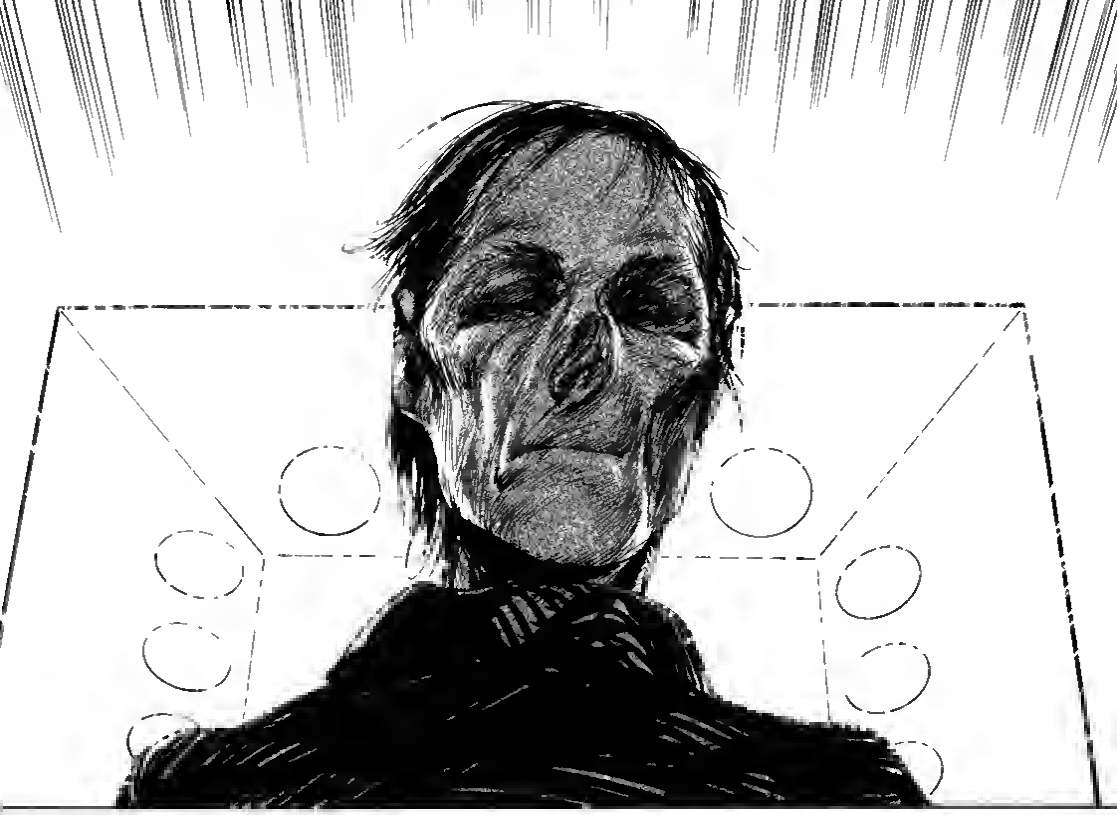


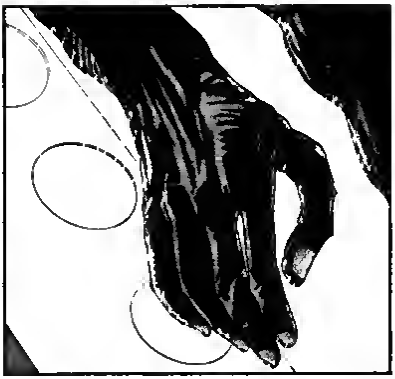


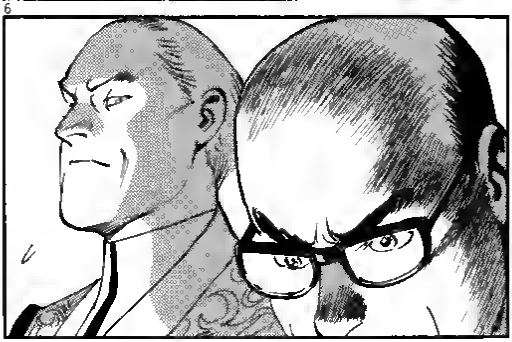

SCAN-
NING
COM-
PLETE.


SIR.
SEND THE 3D DATA OVER HERE, GREY.

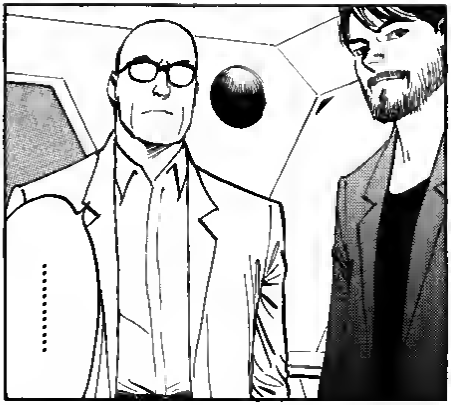
SET THE TRANS-PARENCY LEVEL JUST INSIDE THE SPACESUIT.
4







'CHAR-LIE'?
J... JUST AS WE OBSERVED IN THE PRELIMINARY X-RAYS, CHARLIE HERE'S JUST LIKE A HUMAN MUMMY...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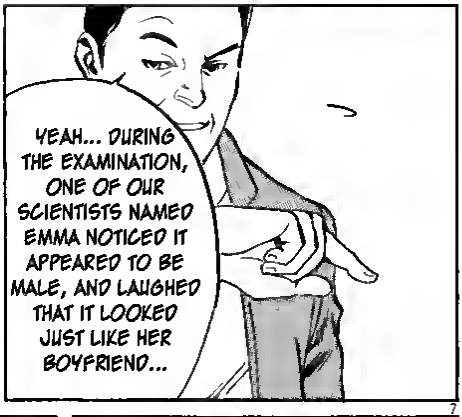
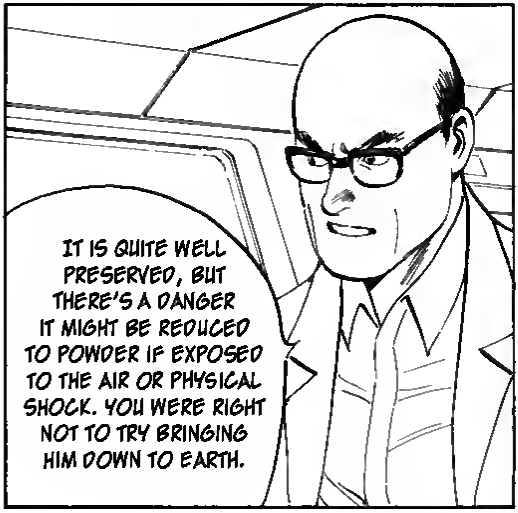
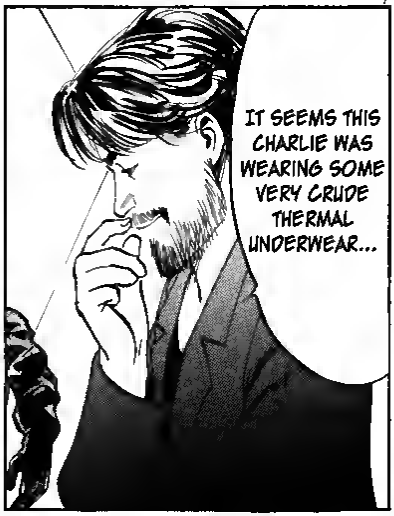
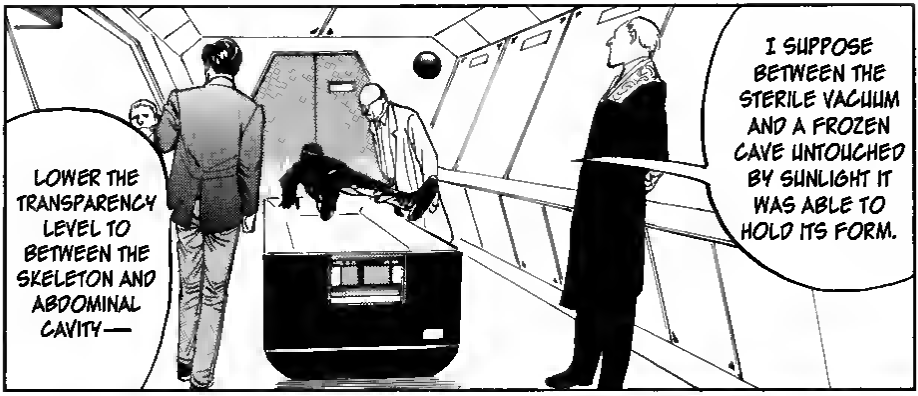
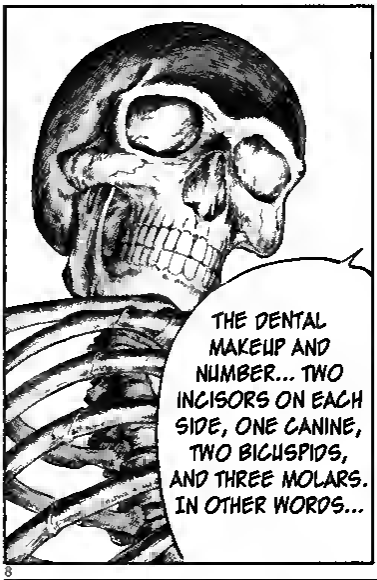

YEAH... DURING THE EXAMINATION, ONE OF OUR SCIENTISTS NAMED EMMA NOTICED IT APPEARED TO BE MALE, AND LAUGHED THAT IT LOOKED JUST LIKE HER BOYFRIEND...

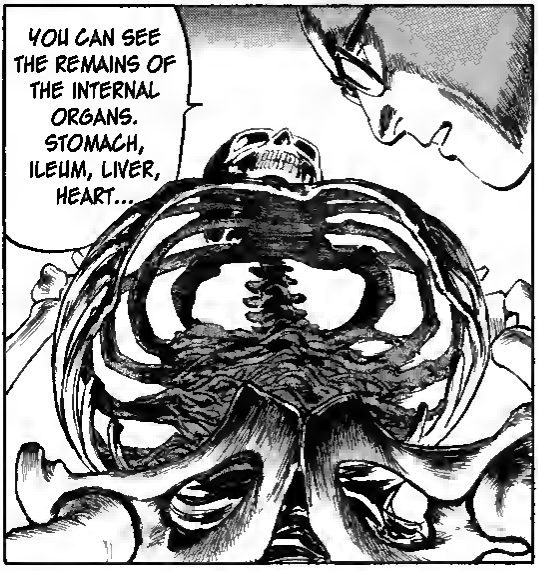
7


IT IS QUITE WELL PRESERVED, BUT THERE'S A DANGER IT MIGHT BE REDUCED TO POWDER IF EXPOSED TO THE AIR OR PHYSICAL SHOCK. YOU WERE RIGHT NOT TO TRY BRINGING HIM DOWN TO EARTH.


IT SEEMS THIS CHARLIE WAS WEARING SOME VERY CRUDE THERMAL UNDERWEAR...


LOWER THE TRANSPARENCY LEVEL TO BETWEEN THE SKELETON AND ABDOMINAL CAVITY—
I SUPPOSE BETWEEN THE STERILE VACUUM AND A FROZEN CAVE UNTOUCHED BY SUNLIGHT IT WAS ABLE TO HOLD ITS FORM.


THE DENTAL MAKEUP AND NUMBER... TWO INCISORS ON EACH SIDE, ONE CANINE, TWO BICUSPIDS, AND THREE MOLARS. IN OTHER WORDS...

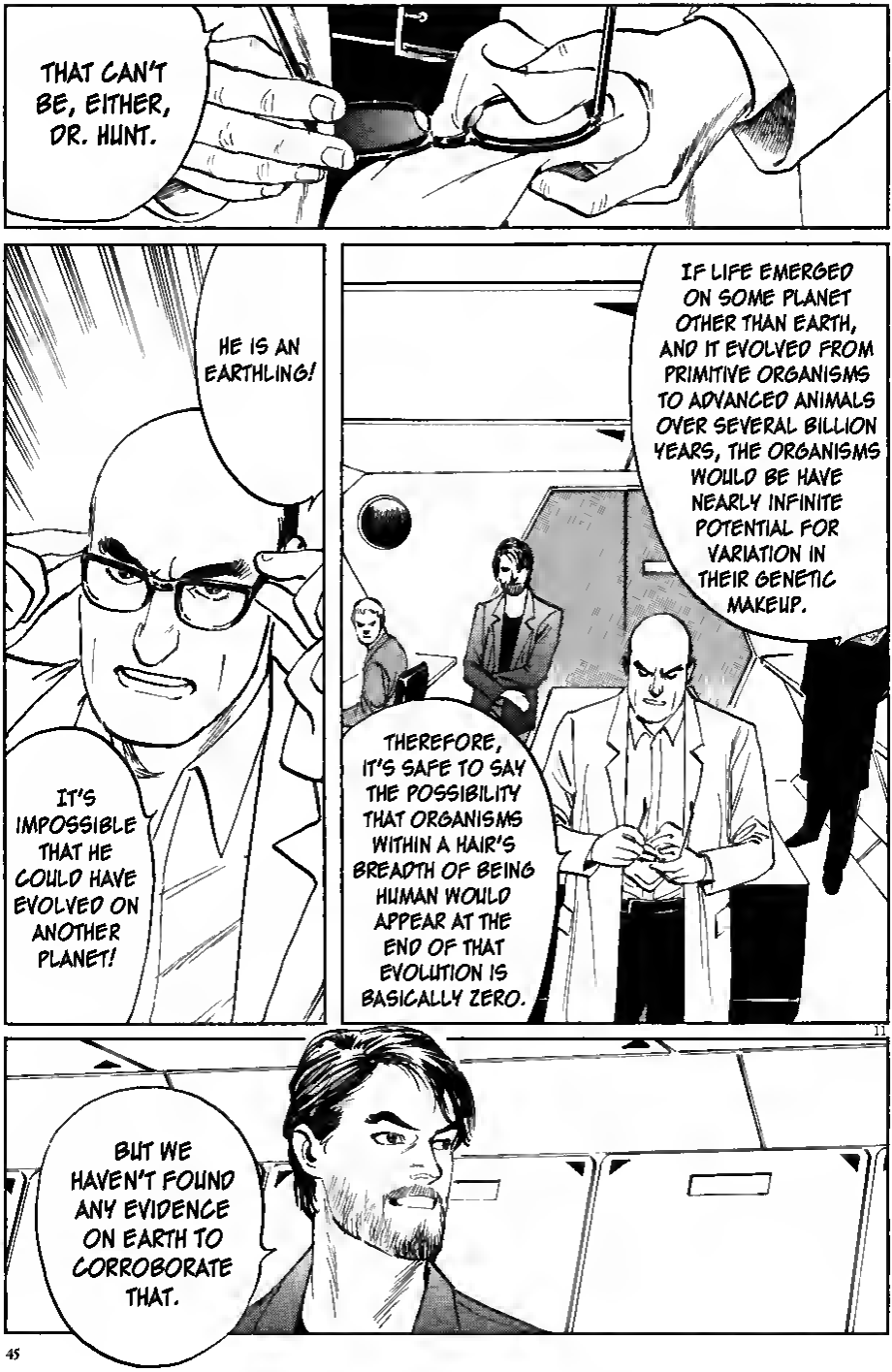

YOU CAN SEE THE REMAINS OF THE INTERNAL ORGANS. STOMACH, ILEUM, LIVER, HEART...

8

FROM THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE TO THE FINE DETAILS, EVERYTHING POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THIS WAS A BONA FIDE HUMAN BEING!
THIS IS A HUMAN!

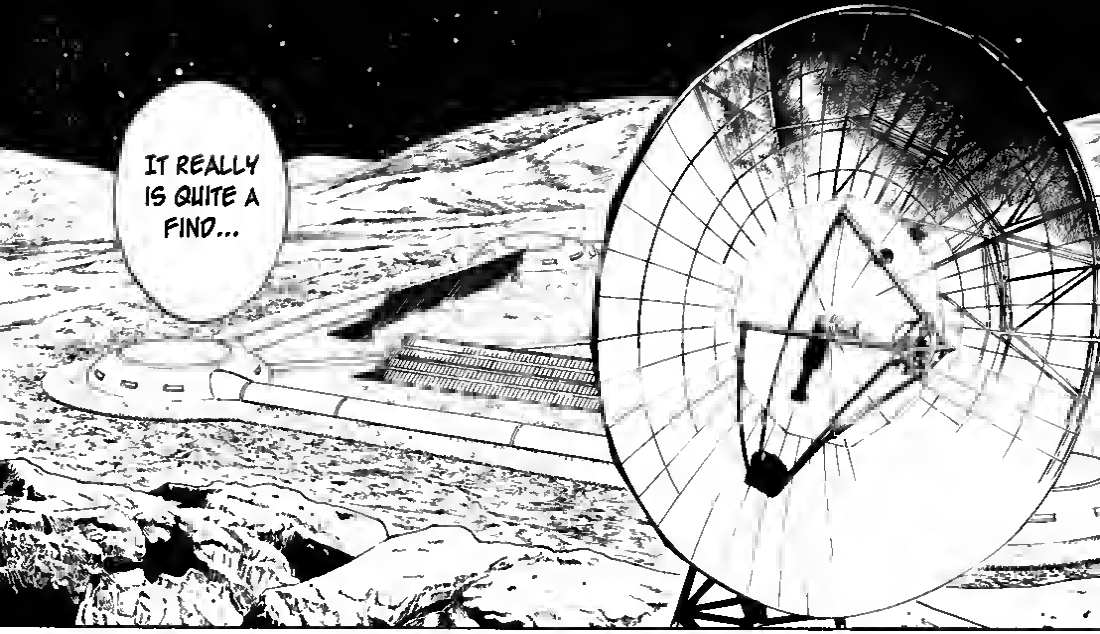
.....
IT'S A... HUMAN?
A HUMAN FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO, ON THE MOON WITH A SPACESUIT?
A LITTLE GREY MAN WITH HUGE POINTY EYES WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE...
SO HOW DID YOU DATE IT? I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T TOUCH IT DIRECTLY.
9
AMAZINGLY, THE BACKPACK WAS INSTALLED WITH ULTRA-MINIATURE NUCLEAR REACTORS, AND WE RECOVERED URANIUM-235 FUEL PELLETS.
WE WERE ABLE TO GET HIS BACKPACK AND BELONGINGS OFF HIM, SO WE EXAMINED THOSE FIRST, MR. SORENSEN.

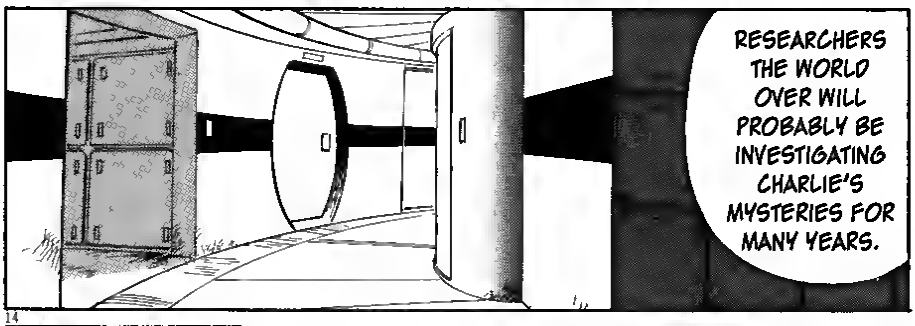
SO WHAT BECAME OF THE CIVILIZATION? THE MOON? THERE'S NO WAY THEY WERE HERE ON THE MOON WITHOUT ANY ATMOSPHERE OR OCEANS.
BY ANALYZING THE RADIOACTIVE DECAY, WE DETERMINED BEYOND ANY DOUBT THAT IT WAS MADE 50,000 YEARS AGO.
IF A CIVILIZATION EXISTED FIFTY MILLENIA AGO WITH THE CAPABILITY OF MINIATURE NUCLEAR REACTORS AND SPACEFLIGHT, THERE'S NO WAY WE WOULDN'T HAVE FOUND OUT ABOUT IT.
SO, THE EARTH THEN? OR PERHAPS IT WAS SOME PLANET OTHER THAN THE EARTH—
WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ASSUME THAT CHARLIE IS AN ALIEN FROM SOME OTHER UNKNOWN PLANET.
WE WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED RUINS OF ADVANCED CITIES ALL OVER THE EARTH, WITH COUNTLESS DISUSED MACHINES, LONG AGO! SO THAT CAN'T BE!


THAT CAN'T BE, EITHER, DR. HUNT.
HE IS AN EARTHLING!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE THAT HE COULD HAVE EVOLVED ON ANOTHER PLANET!
IF LIFE EMERGED ON SOME PLANET OTHER THAN EARTH, AND IT EVOLVED FROM PRIMITIVE ORGANISMS TO ADVANCED ANIMALS OVER SEVERAL BILLION YEARS, THE ORGANISMS WOULD BE HAVE NEARLY INFINITE POTENTIAL FOR VARIATION IN THEIR GENETIC MAKEUP.
THEREFORE, IT'S SAFE TO SAY THE POSSIBILITY THAT ORGANISMS WITHIN A HAIR'S BREADTH OF BEING HUMAN WOULD APPEAR AT THE END OF THAT EVOLUTION IS BASICALLY ZERO.
BUT WE HAVEN'T FOUND ANY EVIDENCE ON EARTH TO CORROBORATE THAT.

THE PROOF IS RIGHT OVER THERE! I DON'T CARE WHAT ANYONE SAYS, THAT IS A MAN FROM EARTH.
I'M SPEAKING FROM THE POSITION OF A BIOLOGIST.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF MAKING ANY CLAIMS BEYOND THAT.
NOW THAT THE TRIMAGNISCOPE SCAN IS COMPLETE, WOULD IT BE ALRIGHT IF I TOOK A SAMPLE FROM THE BODY OVER THERE AND BEGAN DNA ANALYSIS?
12
WELL THEN, LET'S MOVE CHARLIE TO EXPERIMENT LAB NUMBER 2.
BY ALL MEANS.
BY COMPARING THE DNA TO THAT OF A HUMAN WE'LL REACH A CONCLUSION QUICKLY— AN UNSHAKEABLE CONCLUSION.

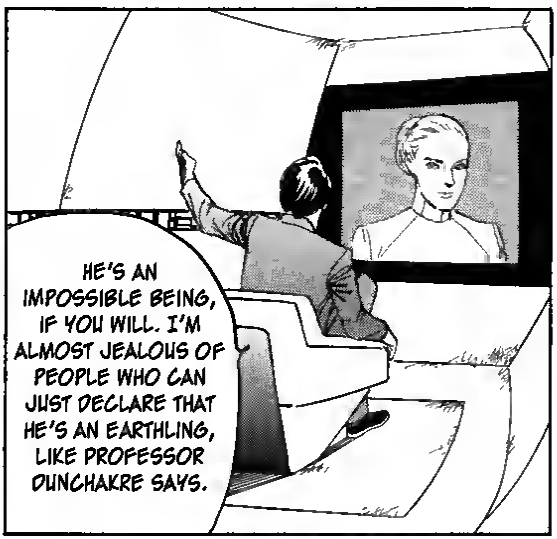
THAT WILL BE FINE.
INDEED, IT'S ALREADY LATE. HOW ABOUT IT, PROFESSOR?
WE STILL HAVE TO SET UP THE APPARATUS, SO WHY DON'T WE LEAVE THE TESTING FOR TOMORROW MORNING?
13


IT REALLY IS QUITE A FIND...


RESEARCHERS THE WORLD OVER WILL PROBABLY BE INVESTIGATING CHARLIE'S MYSTERIES FOR MANY YEARS.

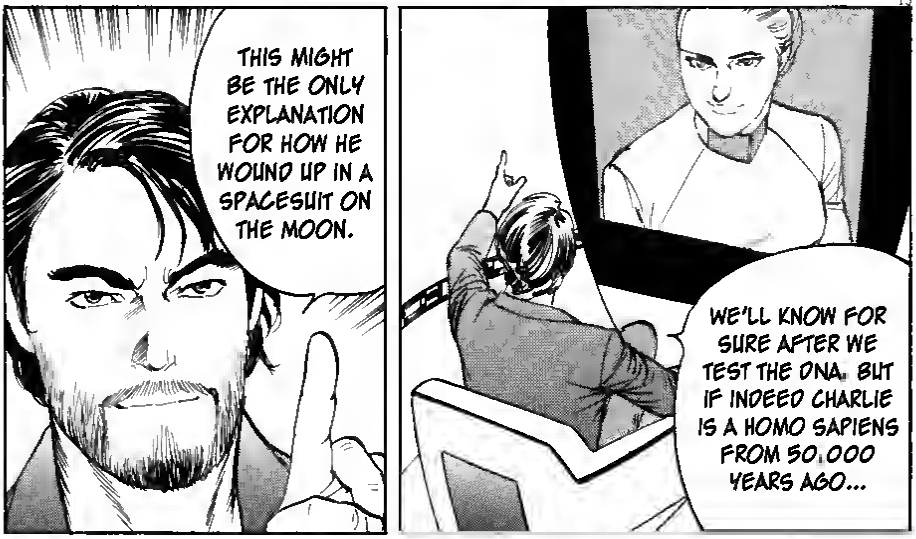
14

SO ARE YOU SAYING YOU KNOW A DIFFERENT PH. D WHO SHOULD BE IN CHARGE OF EXPLAINING IT?


HE'S AN IMPOSSIBLE BEING, IF YOU WILL. I'M ALMOST JEALOUS OF PEOPLE WHO CAN JUST DECLARE THAT HE'S AN EARTHLING, LIKE PROFESSOR OUNCHAKRE SAYS.

WE RECORDED DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT CHARLIE WITH THE TRIMAGNISCOPE. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO LOOK FOR CLUES IN HIS BELONGINGS. MY RESPONSIBILITIES END THERE.
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT ME? I DON'T REMEMBER AGREEING TO TAKE ON THAT ROLE, BUT...

—WELL ALRIGHT, THERE IS JUST ONE EXPLANATION THAT MIGHT ARISE.


THIS MIGHT BE THE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR HOW HE WOUND UP IN A SPACESUIT ON THE MOON.
WE'LL KNOW FOR SURE AFTER WE TEST THE DNA. BUT IF INDEED CHARLIE IS A HOMO SAPIENS FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO...

"ALIENS" HELPED HIM.
ALIENS ...?
PERHAPS THINKING THAT THEY WOULD TURN OUT TO BE A FINE SPECIMEN OF INTELLIGENT LIFE, THEY CAPTURED A FEW AND PUT THEM ABOARD THEIR FLYING SAUCERS.
50,000 YEARS AGO— ALIENS VISITED EARTH AND FOUND HOMO SAPIENS ALL GROUPED UP IN HAPPY LITTLE TRIBES.
16
THEY TAUGHT THEM LANGUAGE, BESTOWED KNOWLEDGE, TOOK THEM TO THE MOON, PUT SPACESUITS ON THEM, AND MAYBE LET THEM PLAY A LITTLE BIT.

PROBABLY, THIS LITTLE SQUIRT WE CALL CHARLIE FUCKED WITH THE SAUCER'S FLIGHT CONTROLS, AND THEY ALMOST CRASHED ON THE MOON.
BUT THEN SOME SORT OF ACCIDENT HAPPENED.

THE ANGRY ALIENS LEFT CHARLIE FOR DEAD ON THE SURFACE AND FLEW AWAY TO SOME STAR SOMEWHERE— AND THAT WAS THAT.

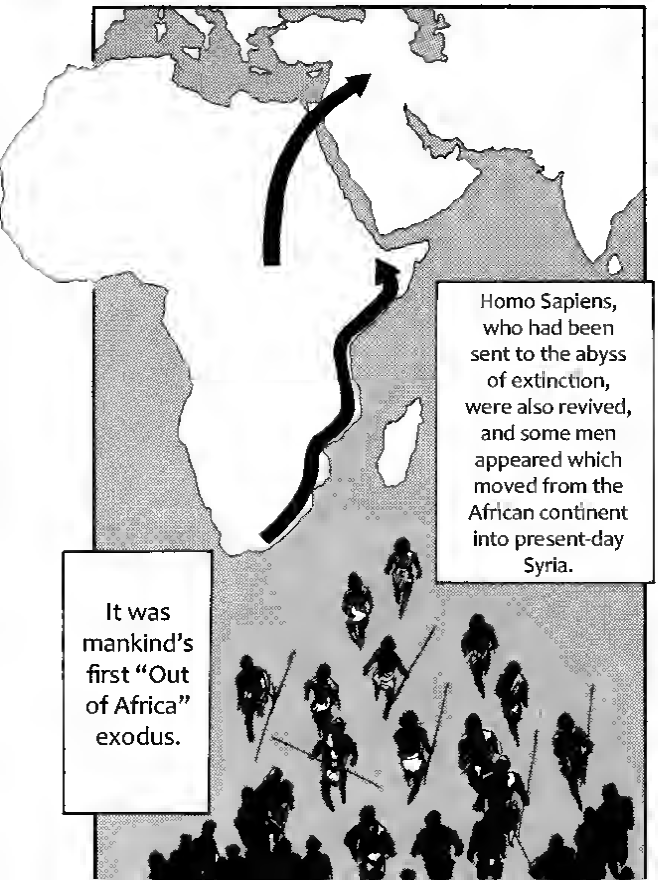
17

I'M SURE IF PROFESSOR DUNCHAKRE HEARD THIS HE'D LAUGH HIS PANTS OFF. THAT'S IF HE'S EVEN CAPABLE OF LAUGHING.
IT'S A JOKE, OF COURSE.
BLAMING ALIENS IS THE TIME-HONORED METHOD OF SOLVING ANY OLD MYSTERY.

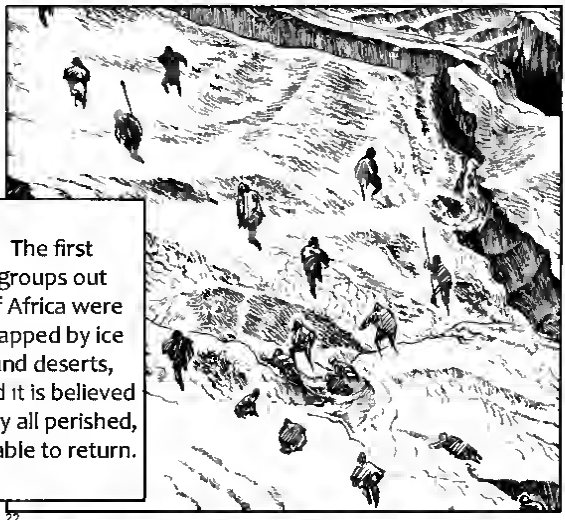
I HOPE I LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS...
Beeeeeiik
IT'S STILL THE FIRST DAY. WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU, DR. HUNT, NO MATTER HOW MUCH TIME IT TAKES.
SO MAYBE DR. HUNT IS PRETTY SHARP, JUST LIKE THE CHIEF SAID HE'D BE.

I WAS A LITTLE SURPRISED WHEN I HEARD HIM MENTION ALIENS. ENOUGH THAT I WONDERED WHETHER DR. HUNT DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT MISSION J5.
WHEN IT COMES TO HAVING AN EYE FOR PEOPLE, THERE'S NO ONE LIKE THE CHIEF!
IF HE COMES UP WITH A BRILLIANT SOLUTION TO THE CHARLIE MYSTERY, YOU'RE THINKING YOU'D LIKE HIM TO PARTICIPATE IN THAT TOO, AREN'T YOU?
NO ONE CAN COMPLAIN ABOUT THEM BECAUSE THEY SUPPOSEDLY ACT WITH THE IDEAL OF WORLD PEACE, BUT THOSE GUYS ARE AS INSCRUTABLE AS EVER.
WE'LL HAVE TO PUBLICIZE CHARLIE SOONER OR LATER, NOW THAT WE LET THEM FIND OUT ABOUT HIM.
THAT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD. BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE TOO CONVENIENT THAT SORENSEN FROM THE IPC HAPPENED TO GO TO THE MOON? WE'VE ATTRACTED UNWANTED ATTENTION...

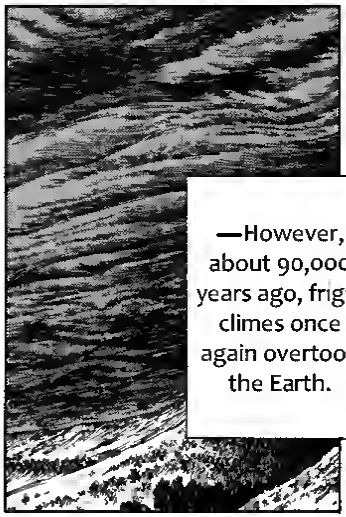
AND WHEN I THINK THERE MAY BE STILL GREATER REVELATIONS TO COME, EVEN MORE SO—
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT CHARLIE IS, ASAP.
AS LONG AS IT REMAINS A MYSTERY, THE SPACE ARMY CAN'T AVOID BEING CRITICIZED AS USELESS AND SECRETIVE, AND IT WILL BE LIKE SOWING THE SEEDS OF UNREST THROUGHOUT THE EARTH.


It was mankind's first "Out of Africa" exodus.
Homo Sapiens, who had been sent to the abyss of extinction, were also revived, and some men appeared which moved from the African continent into present-day Syria.

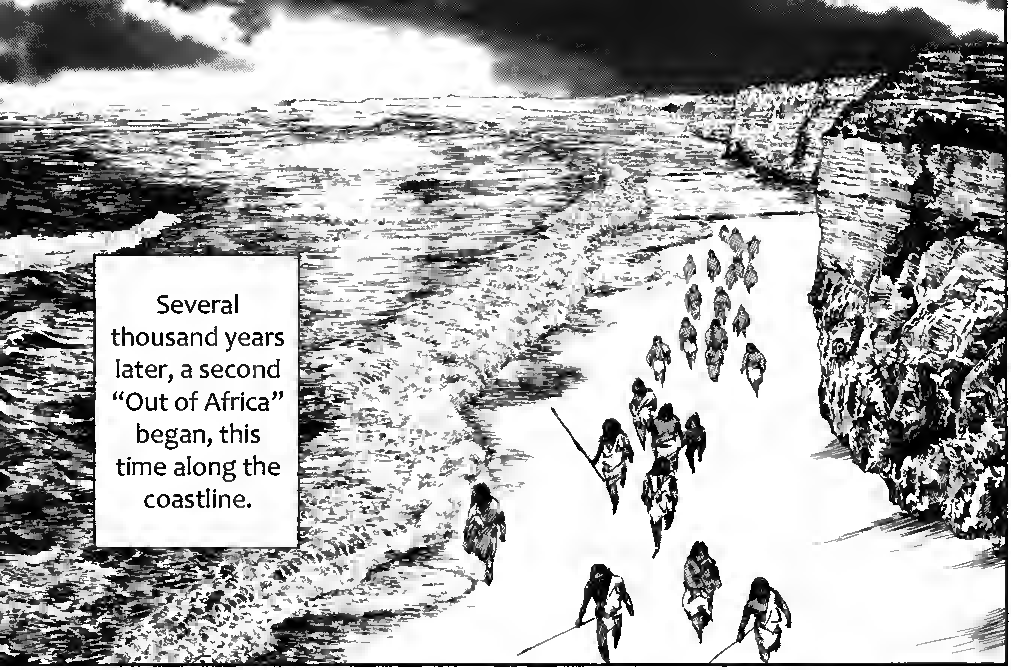
125,000 years ago—
The long ice age finally lifted, and a warm climate was beginning to return to all parts of the Earth.



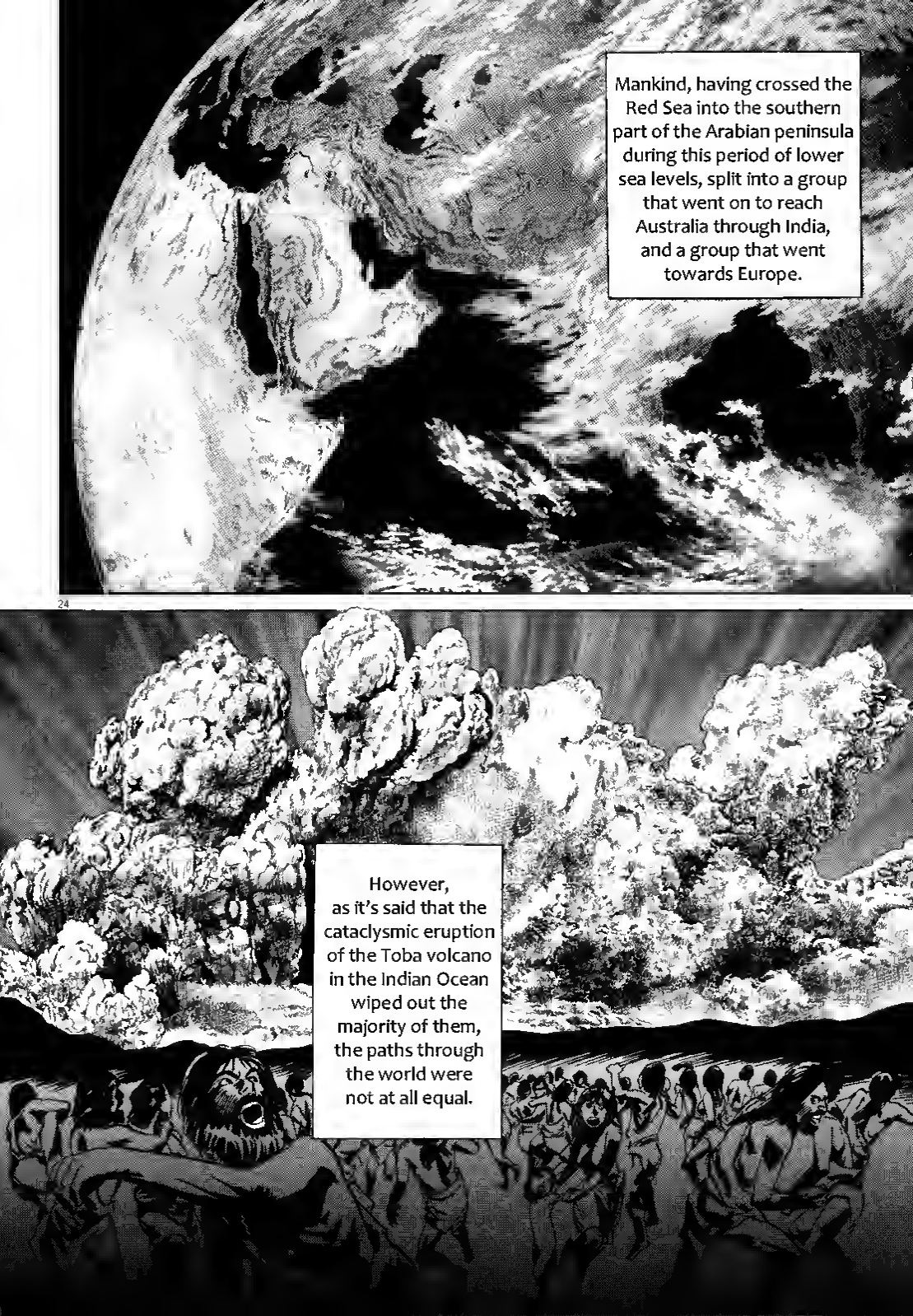
The first groups out of Africa were trapped by ice and deserts, and it is believed they all perished, unable to return.

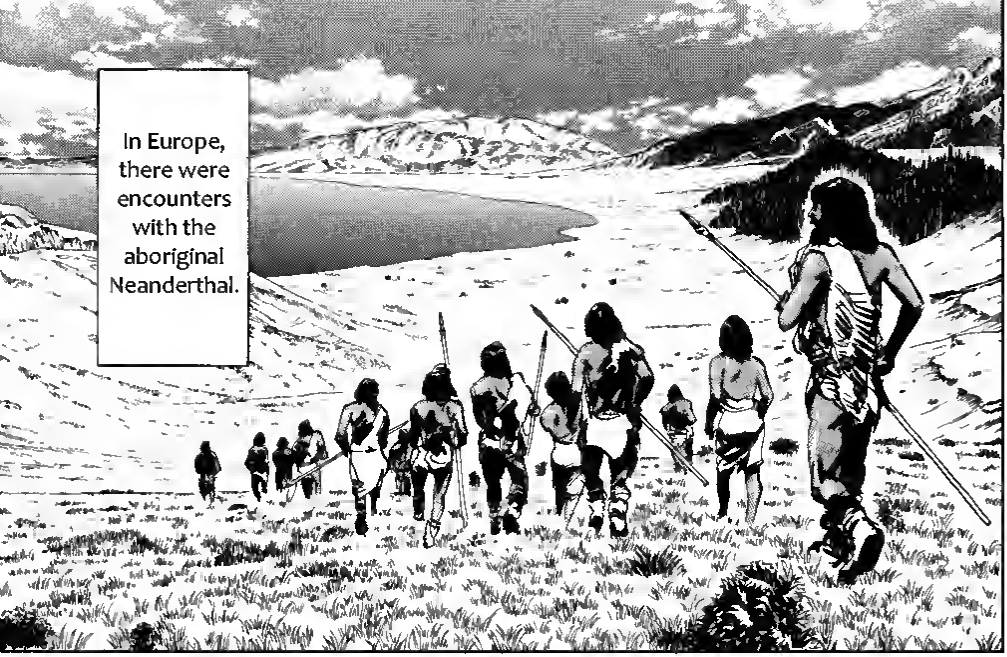


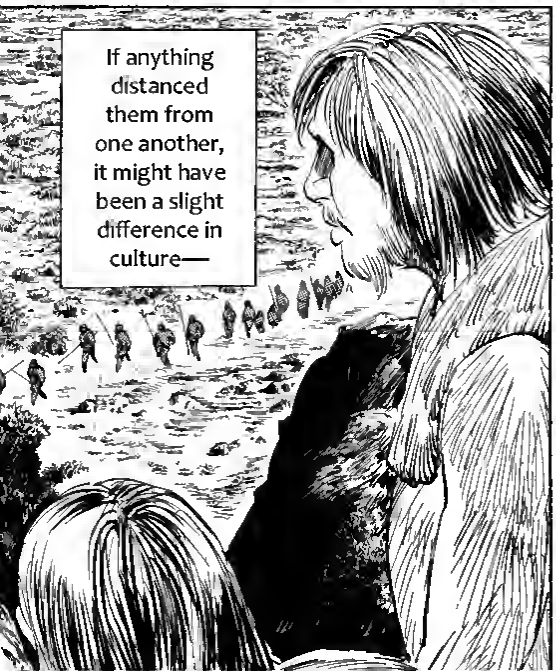
—However, about 90,000 years ago, frigid climes once again overtook the Earth.

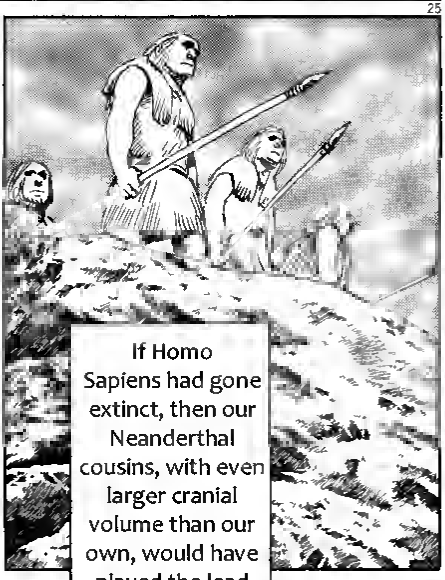

Several thousand years later, a second "Out of Africa" began, this time along the coastline.

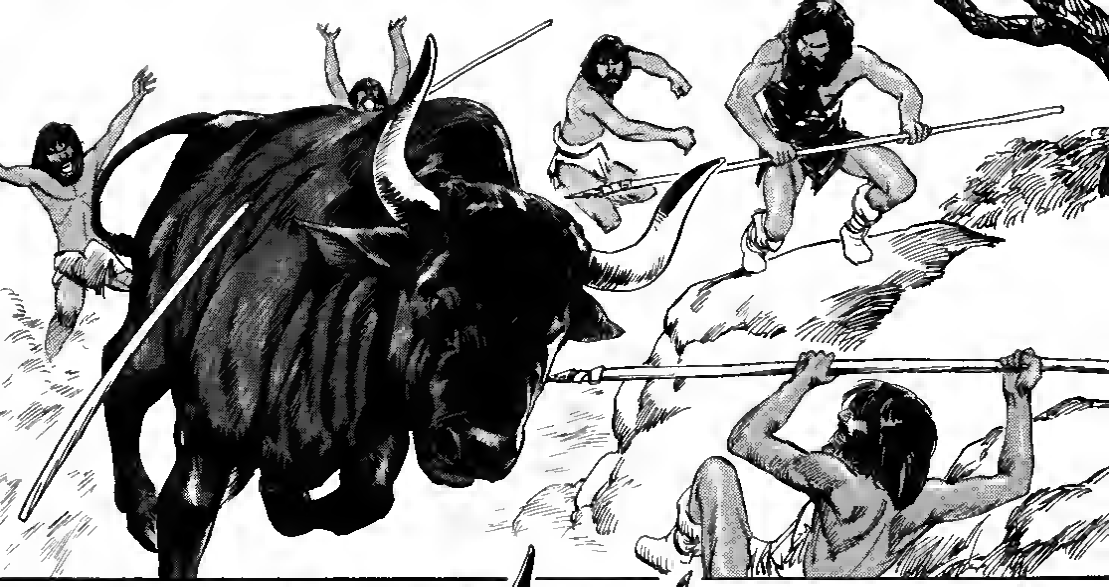
It was far from a courageous mass exodus, but that they were able to keep moving while subsisting on shallow water shellfish is confirmed by shell piles in various places


Mankind, having crossed the Red Sea into the southern part of the Arabian peninsula during this period of lower sea levels, split into a group that went on to reach Australia through India, and a group that went towards Europe.
However, as it's said that the cataclysmic eruption of the Toba volcano in the Indian Ocean wiped out the majority of them, the paths through the world were not at all equal.

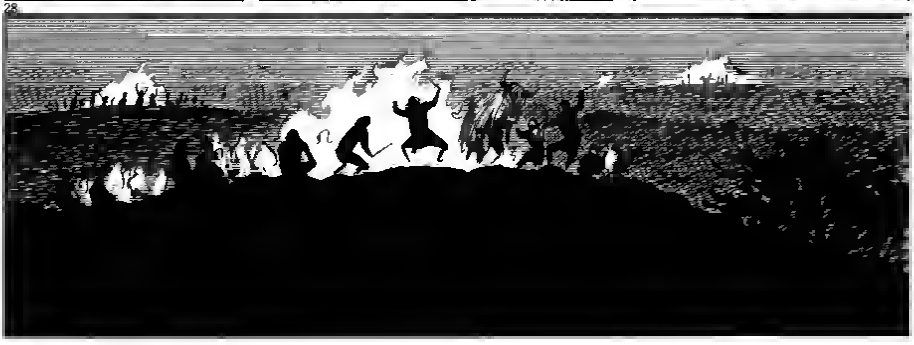

In Europe, there were encounters with the aboriginal Neanderthal.


If anything distanced them from one another, it might have been a slight difference in culture—


If Homo Sapiens had gone extinct, then our Neanderthal cousins, with even larger cranial volume than our own, would have played the lead role in humanity.



28



That was the kind of world it was 50,000 years ago.
The Neanderthal eventually died out, and Homo Sapiens became the only ancestor to mankind.

WHAT THE... A FIRE ALARM!?
FIRE IN LABORATORY NUMBER 2! EXTINGUISHER SYSTEMS NON-FUNCTIONAL!

LAB 2?
THE BODY ...!!

32

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Translation: methanol
Editing: Nitouryu
Quality Check: xyz85-mvb9
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@ircirchighway.net

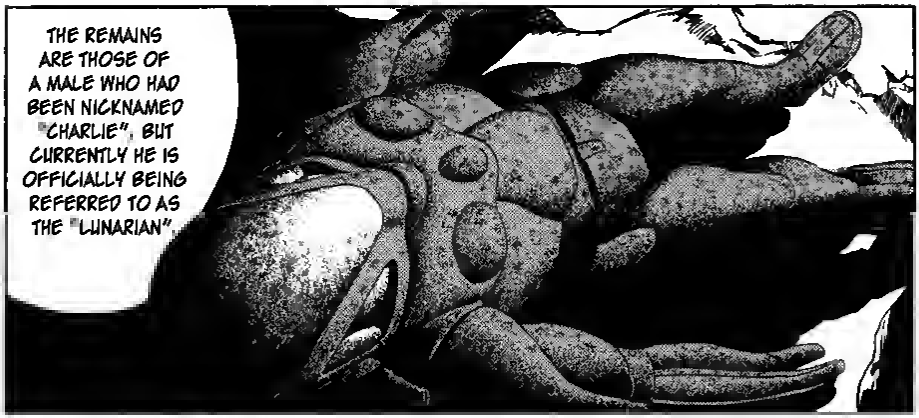
IT SEEMS THAT A LARGE VOLUME OF OXYGEN LEAKED OUT OF A TANK IN THE EXPERIMENT LAB.
THERE AREN'T EVEN ANY ASHES LEFT. THE WHOLE THING WAS COMPLETELY INCINERATED...
IT COULD BE THAT SOME ELECTRICAL LINES IN THE BASE WERE CUT OFF TO SUPPLY THE TRI-MAGNISCOPE WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF ENERGY.
BUT WHY DIDN'T THE SENSORS GO OFF? OR THE EXTINGUISHER SYSTEMS—
WHAT A DISASTER! HOW COULD YOU LET SUCH A DISCOVERY GO UP IN FLAMES...! WHO IS GOING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS!?
THE TRI-MAGNISCOPE? IT DOESN'T GULP DOWN THAT MUCH POWER...

CHAIRMAN SORENSEN, AS I SAID BEFORE, THE POTENTIAL FOR DAMAGE WAS JUDGED TO BE TOO HIGH TO BRING CHARLIE DOWN...
THE SPACE ARMY KEEPING THE BODY ON THE MOON WAS A BAD IDEA FROM THE START. YOU SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT IT TO THE SURFACE AND MADE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT!
I'M RETURNING TO EARTH TO REPORT THIS MATTER TO THE PEACE COMMITTEE AT ONCE!
AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO SHOW FOR IT!?
4

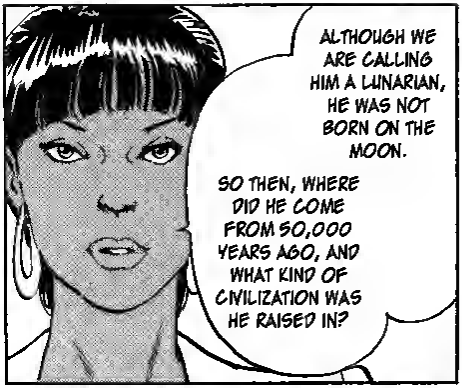
WNN

5

ACCORDING TO A RELEASE BY THE UNITED SPACE ARMY... IT APPEARS THE BODY IS OVER 50,000 YEARS OLD!!
AND NOW TODAY'S TOP HEADLINES. THE BODY OF A CREATURE RESEMBLING A HUMAN WEARING A SPACESUIT WAS DISCOVERED IN A CAVE ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON!!

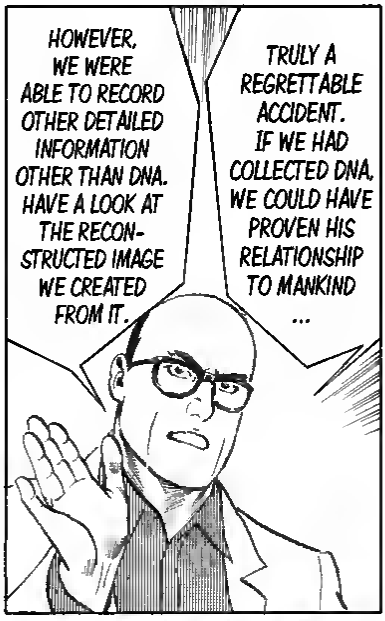

THE REMAINS ARE THOSE OF A MALE WHO HAD BEEN NICKNAMED "CHARLIE", BUT CURRENTLY HE IS OFFICIALLY BEING REFERRED TO AS THE "LUNARIAN".

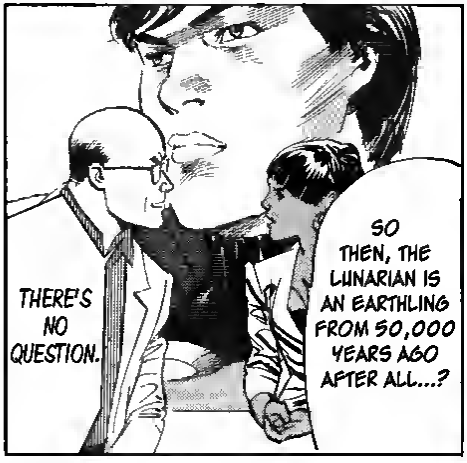
WE'RE ONLINE NOW WITH THE COPERNICUS III TO ASK BIOLOGY PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER.

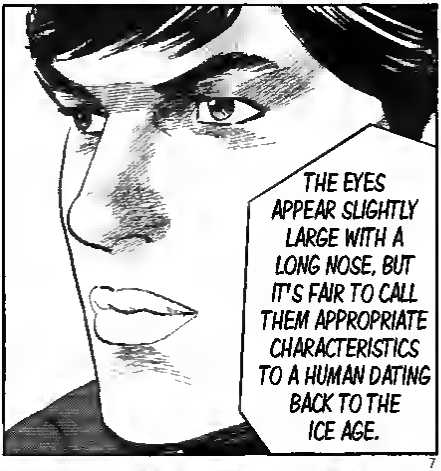

ALTHOUGH WE ARE CALLING HIM A LUNARIAN, HE WAS NOT BORN ON THE MOON.
SO THEN, WHERE DID HE COME FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO, AND WHAT KIND OF CIVILIZATION WAS HE RAISED IN?

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE REMAINS YOU DISCOVERED WERE LOST IN A FIRE, IS THAT CORRECT? THE INTERHATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE HAS CRITICIZED THE SPACE ARMY FOR THEIR HANDLING OF THE SITUATION—

—I'M HERE.


HOWEVER, WE WERE ABLE TO RECORD OTHER DETAILED INFORMATION OTHER THAN DNA. HAVE A LOOK AT THE RECON-STRUCTED IMAGE WE CREATED FROM IT.
TRULY A REGRETTABLE ACCIDENT. IF WE HAD COLLECTED DNA, WE COULD HAVE PROVEN HIS RELATIONSHIP TO MANKIND ...


THERE'S NO QUESTION.
SO THEN, THE LUNARIAN IS AN EARTHLING FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO AFTER ALL...?

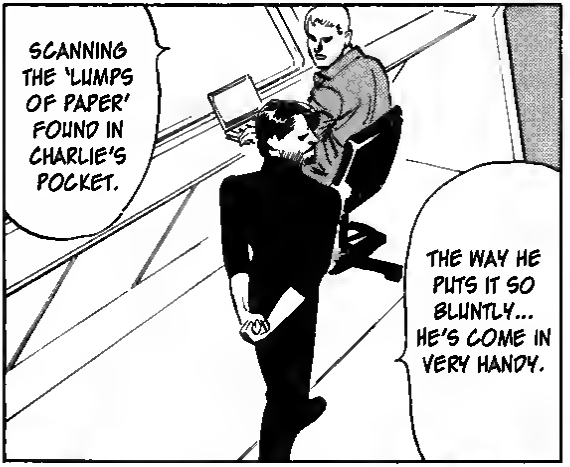

THE EYES APPEAR SLIGHTLY LARGE WITH A LONG NOSE, BUT IT'S FAIR TO CALL THEM APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS TO A HUMAN DATING BACK TO THE ICE AGE.

PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER, WE'VE HEARD OPINIONS FROM A FEW PALEOBIOLOGISTS THAT THE LUNARIAN COULD BE A CREATURE FROM MARS; WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS...?

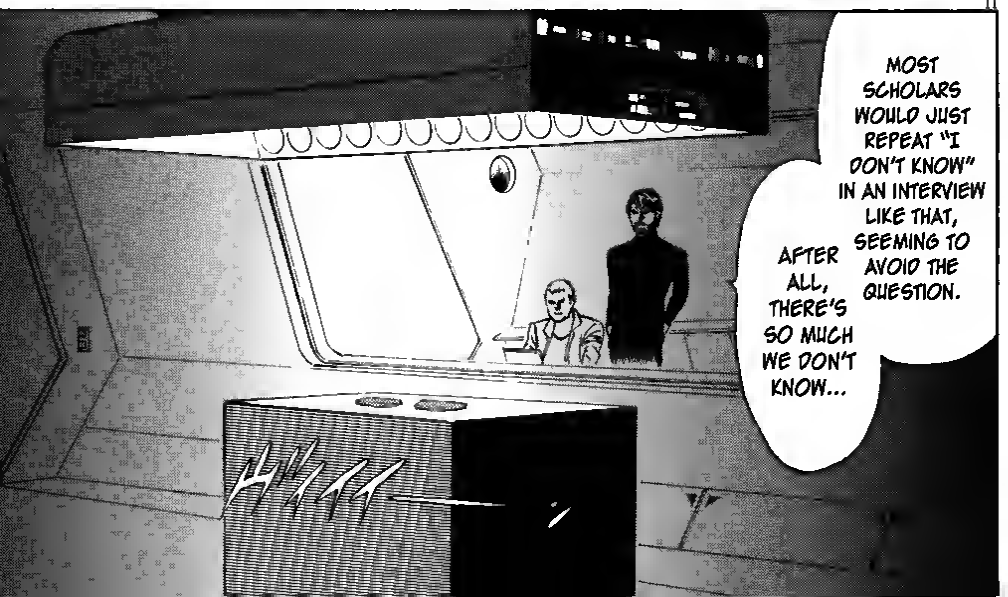
YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE FACTS. UNNECESSARY SPECULATION LEADS ONLY TO ERROR.
I SUPPOSE THEY'VE DECIDED THAT BECAUSE THERE ARE NO TRACES OF SCIENTIFIC CIVILIZATION FROM 50,000 YEARS IN EARTH'S PAST, THE LUNARIAN MUST BE FROM ANOTHER PLANET...
...WHEN MARS HAS STILL SHOWN NO SIGNS OF LIFE, LET ALONE TRACES OF CIVILIZATION.
MIGHT NOT SOMEONE FROM AN ADVANCED MARTIAN CIVILIZATION HAVE COME ON AN EXPEDITION TO THE MOON?
WHILE THE EARTH AND MARS WERE FORMED AT THE SAME TIME, MARS IS VASTLY MORE MATURE AS A PLANET— THEREFORE, THERE MUST BE A POSSIBILITY THAT INTELLIGENT LIFE APPEARED THERE EARLIER THAN ON EARTH.
WHAT A LOAD OF CODSWALLOP...
Their lineage, which began in fishes, eventually adapted to dry land, and evolved into amphibians, reptiles, and finally mammals—
Among the things life on Earth gained through the process of evolution is the internal structure of vertebrate animals, appearing 500,000,000 years before present day.

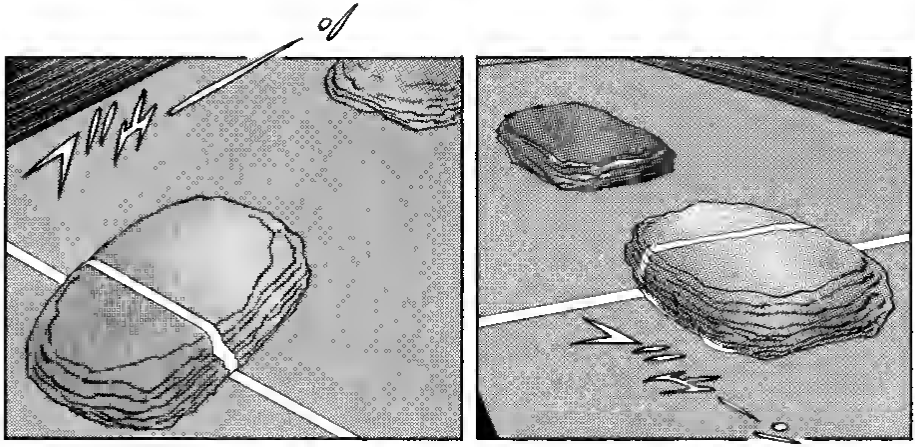
In this many hundred million years long process of evolution, if even a single thing had been different somewhere, mankind would never have been born——
Or, to put it another way, the probability of the same process occuring on another planet, producing a creature within a hair's breadth of being human, is infinitely close to zero.

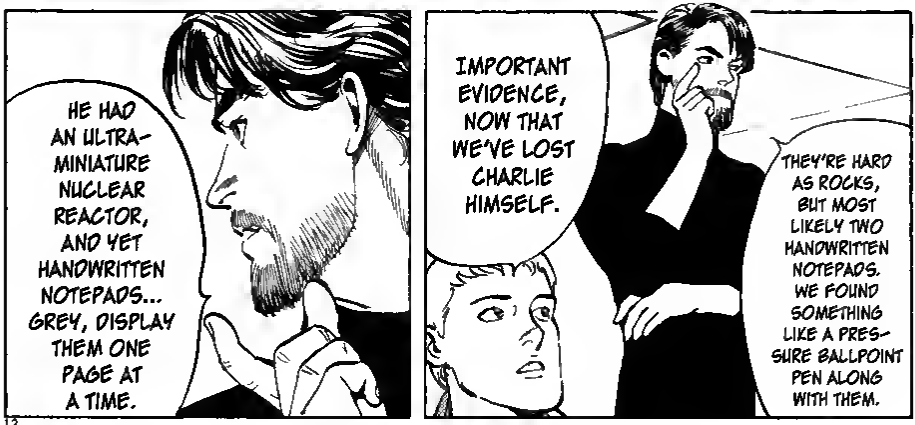
AND IF...
...A CREATURE EXISTED THAT WAS SO IMPOSSIBLY CLOSE TO BEING HUMAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE CHANCES ARE THAT IT WOULD COME RIGHT UP TO EARTH FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE VASTNESS OF THE UNIVERSE?

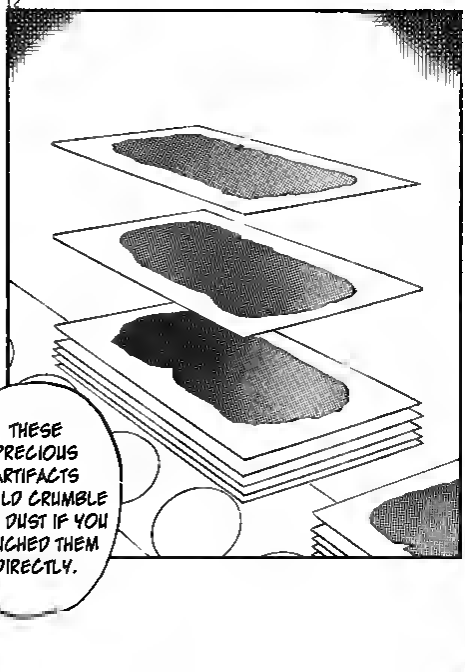

SCANNING THE 'LUMPS OF PAPER' FOUND IN CHARLIE'S POCKET.
THE WAY HE PUTS IT SO BLUNTLY... HE'S COME IN VERY HANDY.

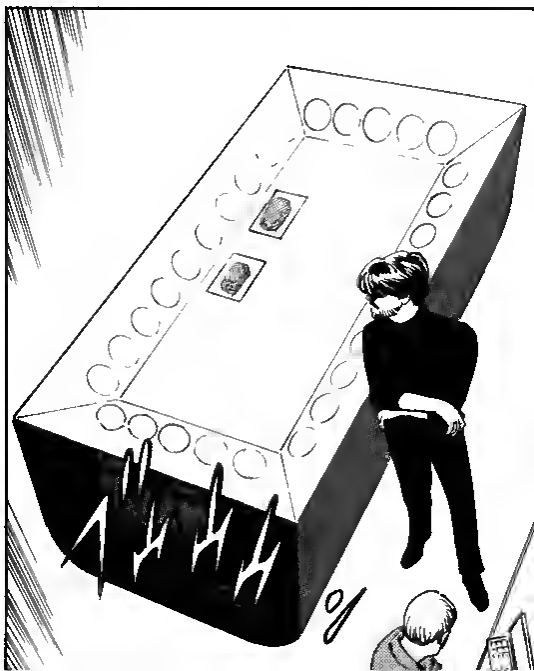
HEHE...

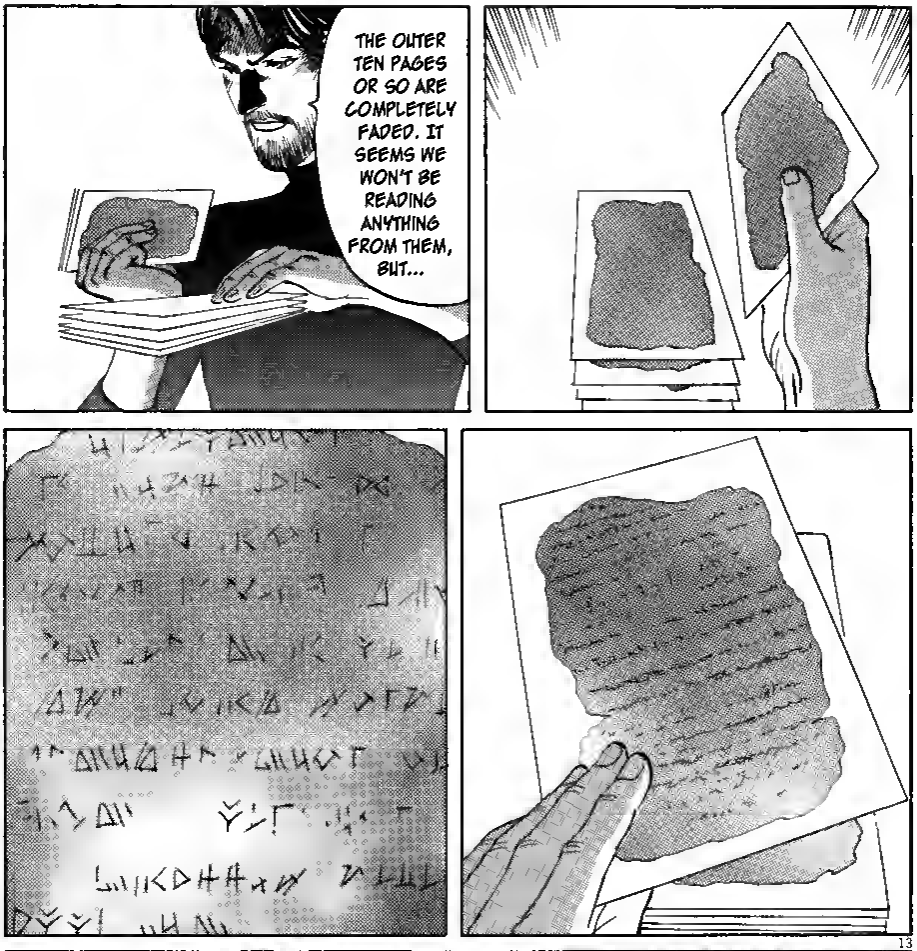

MOST SCHOLARS WOULD JUST REPEAT "I DON'T KNOW" IN AN INTERVIEW LIKE THAT, SEEMING TO AVOID THE QUESTION.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S SO MUCH WE DON'T KNOW...
HWAAA

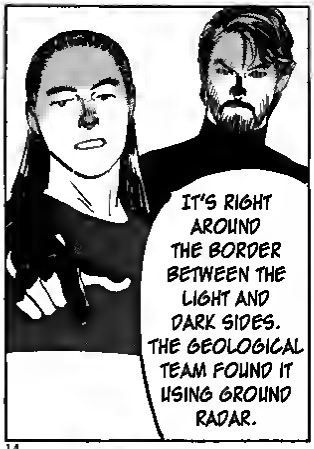



HE HAD AN ULTRA-MINIATURE NUCLEAR REACTOR, AND YET HANDWRITTEN NOTEPADS... GREY, DISPLAY THEM ONE PAGE AT A TIME.
IMPORTANT EVIDENCE, NOW THAT WE'VE LOST CHARLIE HIMSELF.
THEY'RE HARD AS ROCKS, BUT MOST LIKELY TWO HANDWRITTEN NOTEPADS. WE FOUND SOMETHING LIKE A PRESSURE BALLPOINT PEN ALONG WITH THEM.

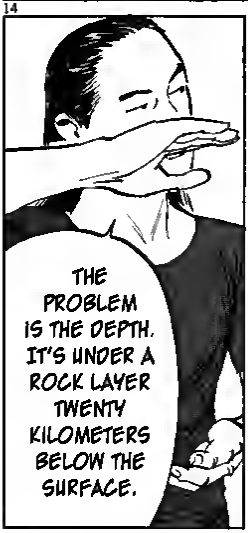

THESE PRECIOUS ARTIFACTS WOULD CRUMBLE LIKE DUST IF YOU TOUCHED THEM DIRECTLY.



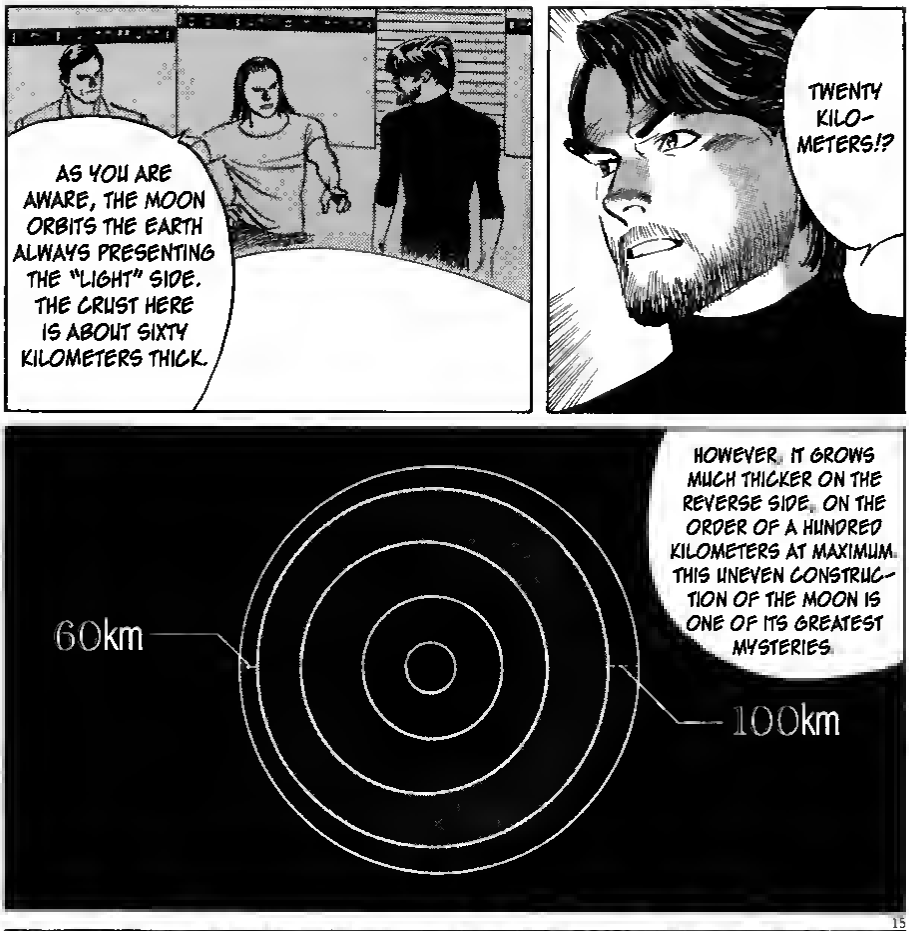

THE OUTER TEN PAGES OR SO ARE COMPLETELY FADED. IT SEEMS WE WON'T BE READING ANYTHING FROM THEM, BUT...
13
ROGER!
READ OFF ALL THE LETTERS AND SEND THEM TO EARTH. IT'S TIME FOR THE DECRYPTION TEAM TO GET TO WORK.
THIS IS IN THE LUNARIAN'S SCRIPT.


IT'S RIGHT AROUND THE BORDER BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES. THE GEOLOGICAL TEAM FOUND IT USING GROUND RADAR.

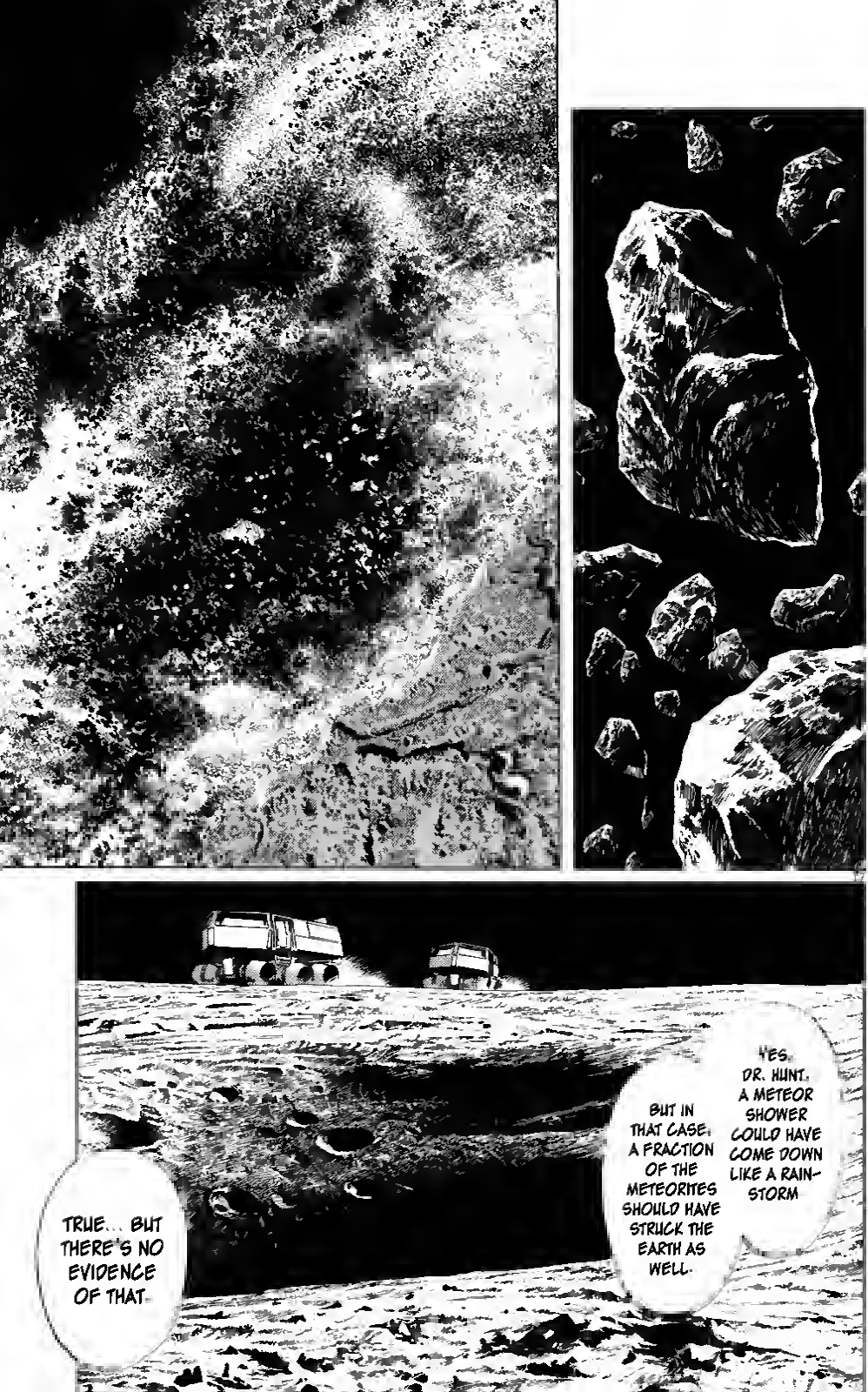
A DEEP CAVITY...?


THE PROBLEM IS THE DEPTH. IT'S UNDER A ROCK LAYER TWENTY KILOMETERS BELOW THE SURFACE.

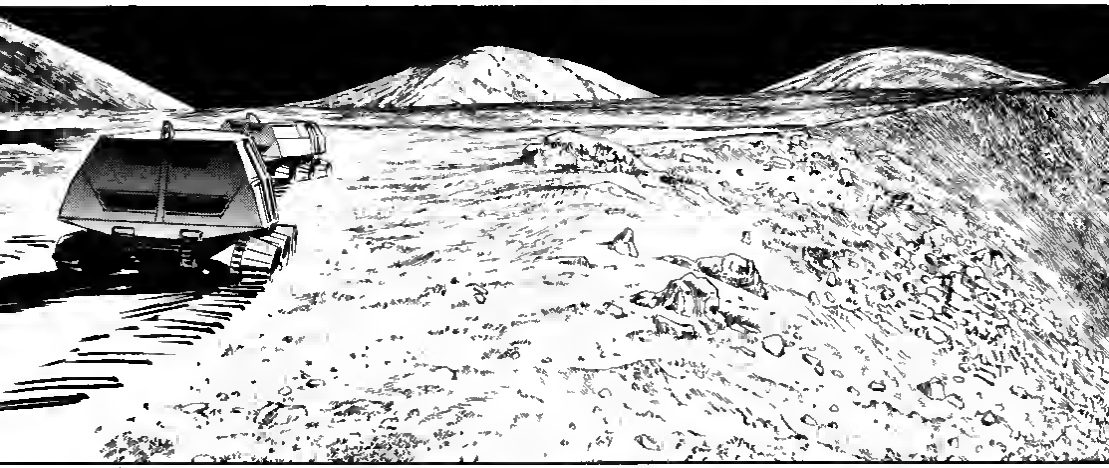
PERHAPS IT COULD BE A REMNANT FROM THE LUNARIAN'S TIME PERIOD...?
IT'S NOT ALL THAT LARGE, BUT IT APPEARS TO BE HOLLOWED OUT IN A STRAIGHT LINE.

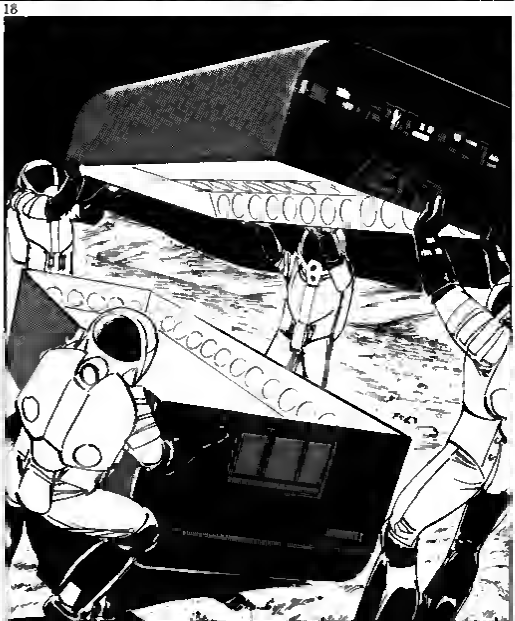

AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE MOON ORBITS THE EARTH ALWAYS PRESENTING THE "LIGHT" SIDE. THE CRUST HERE IS ABOUT SIXTY KILOMETERS THICK.
TWENTY KILO-METERS!?
HOWEVER, IT GROWS MUCH THICKER ON THE REVERSE SIDE, ON THE ORDER OF A HUNDRED KILOMETERS AT MAXIMUM. THIS UNEVEN CONSTRUC-TION OF THE MOON IS ONE OF ITS GREATEST MYSTERIES.
60km
100km
PRECISELY. IF YOU CONSIDER THE CAVITY WE MENTIONED EARLIER ON THE SURFACE OF A SIXTY KILOMETER THICK CRUST, WITH TWENTY KILOMETERS OF ROCK PILED UP ON TOP OF IT, THE MATH ADDS UP.
SO, AROUND THE BORDER BETWEEN THE FRONT AND REVERSE SIDES, THE CRUST WOULD BE AROUND EIGHTY KILOMETERS THICK?

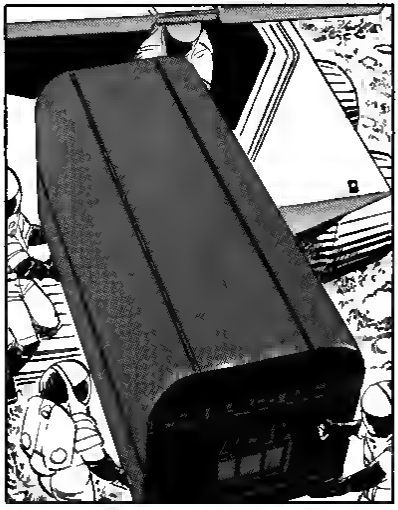
IN FACT, THE RESULTS OF THE GEOLOGICAL STUDY SHOW THAT, VERY RECENTLY, AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF ROCK AND DUST WAS DUMPED ALL OVER THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE MOON.
ROUGHLY 50,000 YEARS AGO.
AND BY VERY RECENTLY, YOU MEAN...?

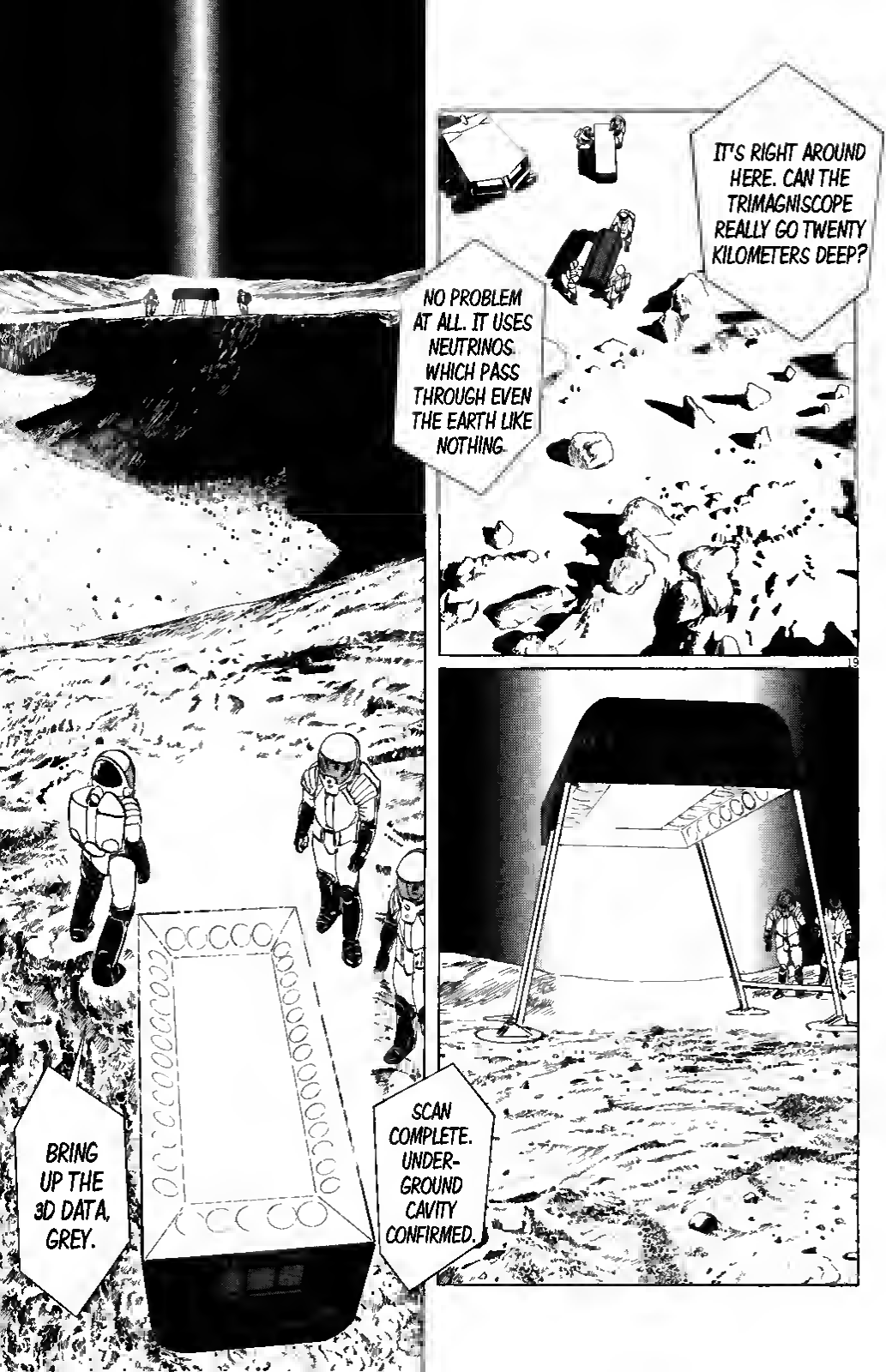

YES, DR. HUNT. A METEOR SHOWER COULD HAVE COME DOWN LIKE A RAIN-STORM
BUT IN THAT CASE, A FRACTION OF THE METEORITES SHOULD HAVE STRUCK THE EARTH AS WELL.
TRUE... BUT THERE'S NO EVIDENCE OF THAT.

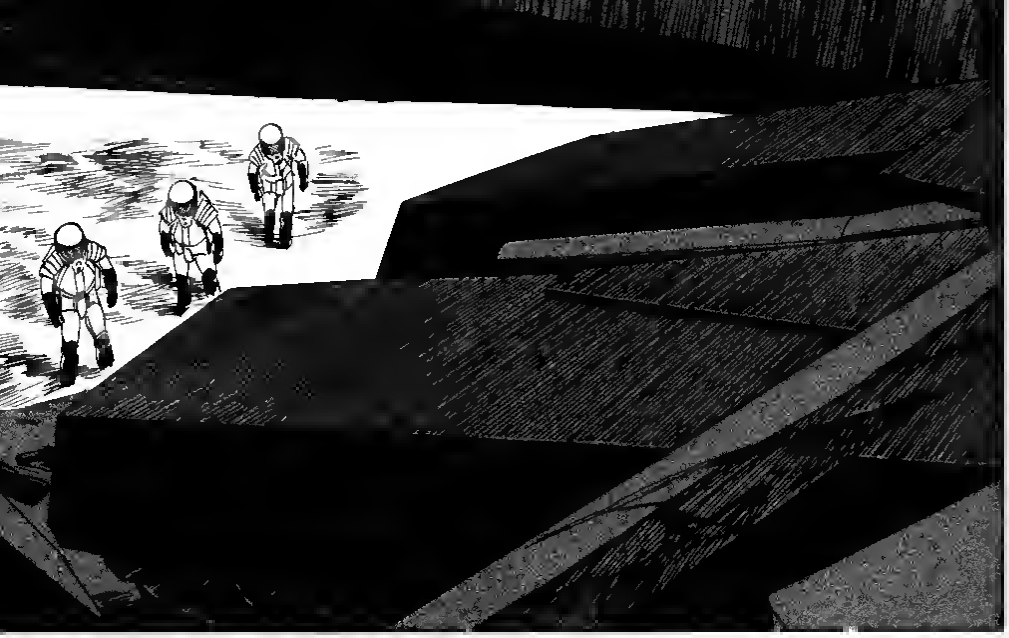
CHARLIE MAY HAVE ESCAPED DESTRUCTION BECAUSE HE WAS PROTECTED BY A CAVE NEAR THE BORDER OF THE DARK AND LIGHT SIDES...
ON THE MOON, AT LEAST, IF SUCH A MAJOR EVENT HAPPENED, THE MAJORITY OF THE LUNARIANS' REMAINS WOULD HAVE BEEN SMASHED.



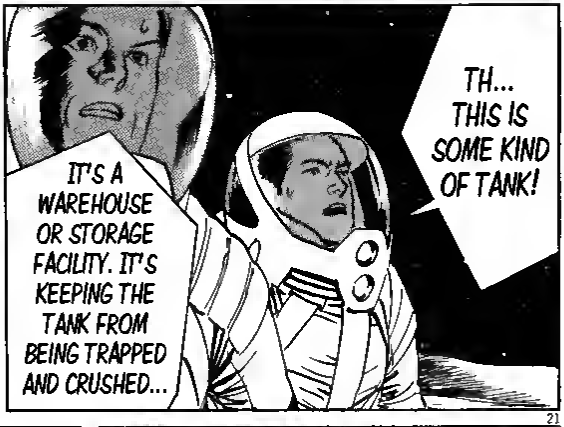





IT'S RIGHT AROUND HERE. CAN THE TRIMAGNISCOPE REALLY GO TWENTY KILOMETERS DEEP?
NO PROBLEM AT ALL. IT USES NEUTRINOS. WHICH PASS THROUGH EVEN THE EARTH LIKE NOTHING.
19
SCAN COMPLETE. UNDER-GROUND CAVITY CONFIRMED.
BRING UP THE 3D DATA, GREY.

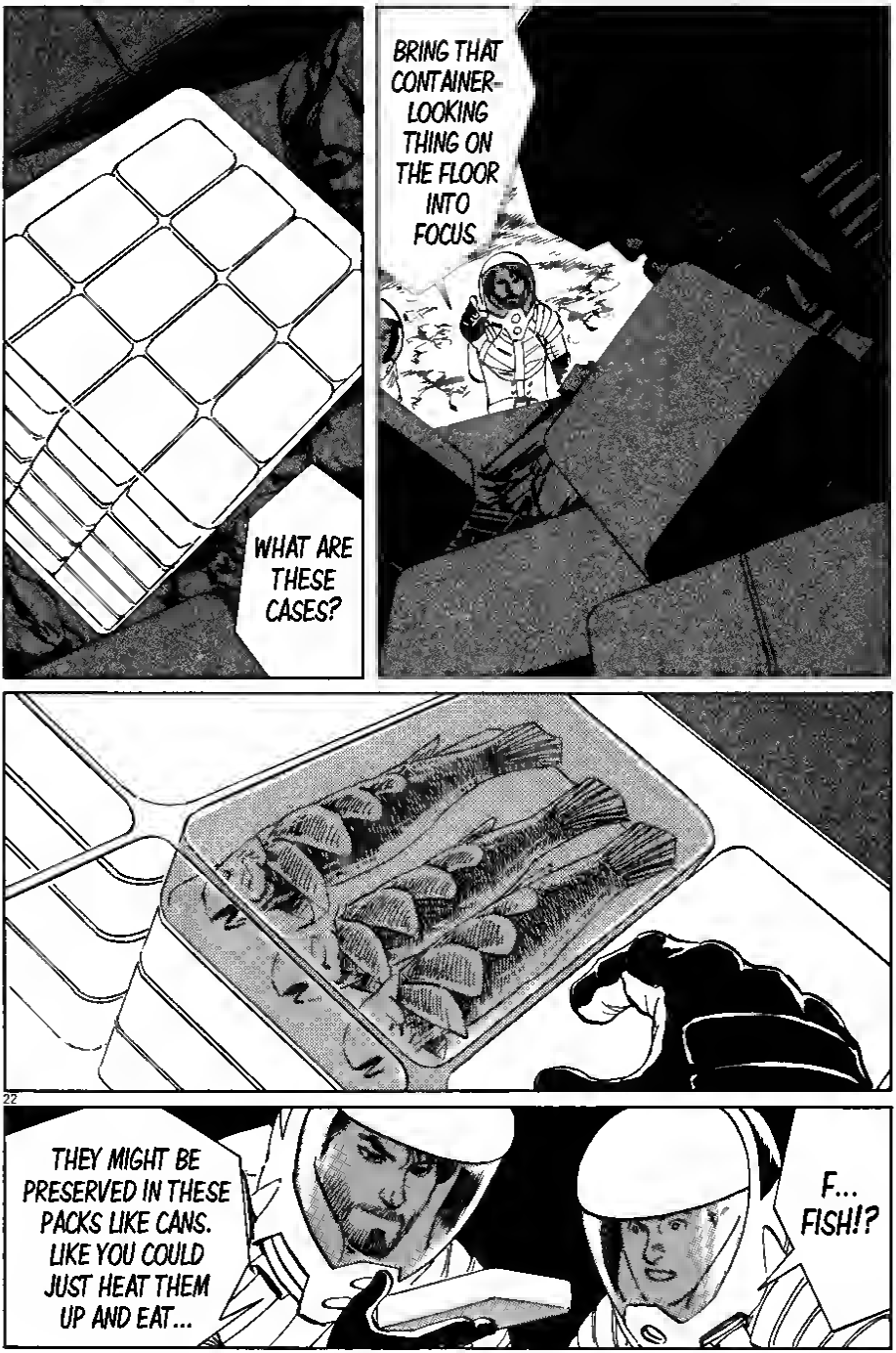


AND THOSE THINGS SCATTERED ALL OVER THE FLOOR LOOK LIKE WEAPONS ...

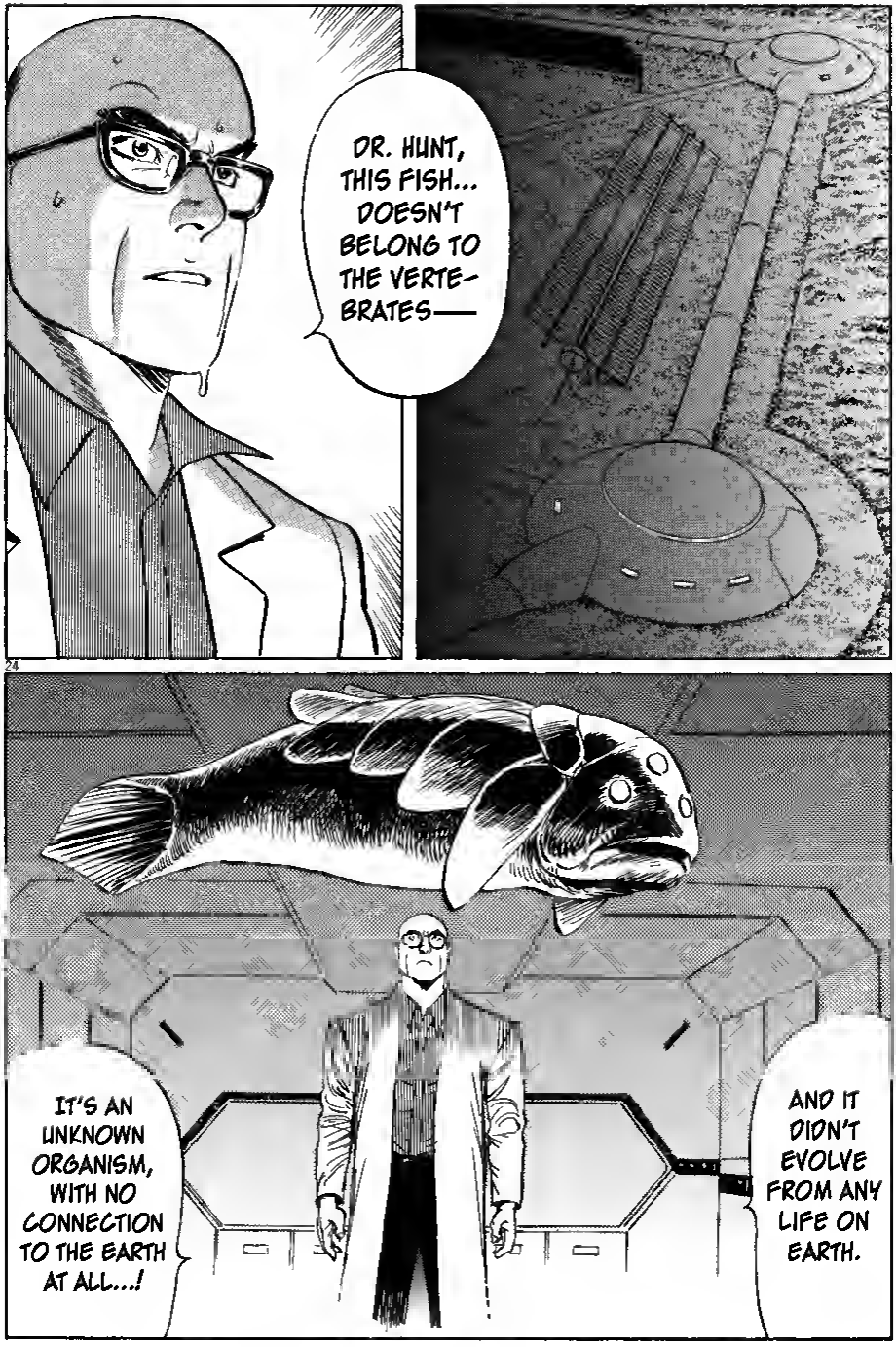

IT'S A WAREHOUSE OR STORAGE FACILITY. IT'S KEEPING THE TANK FROM BEING TRAPPED AND CRUSHED...
TH... THIS IS SOME KIND OF TANK!

21

TANKS AND WEAPONS ON TOP OF CHARLIE... WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!?

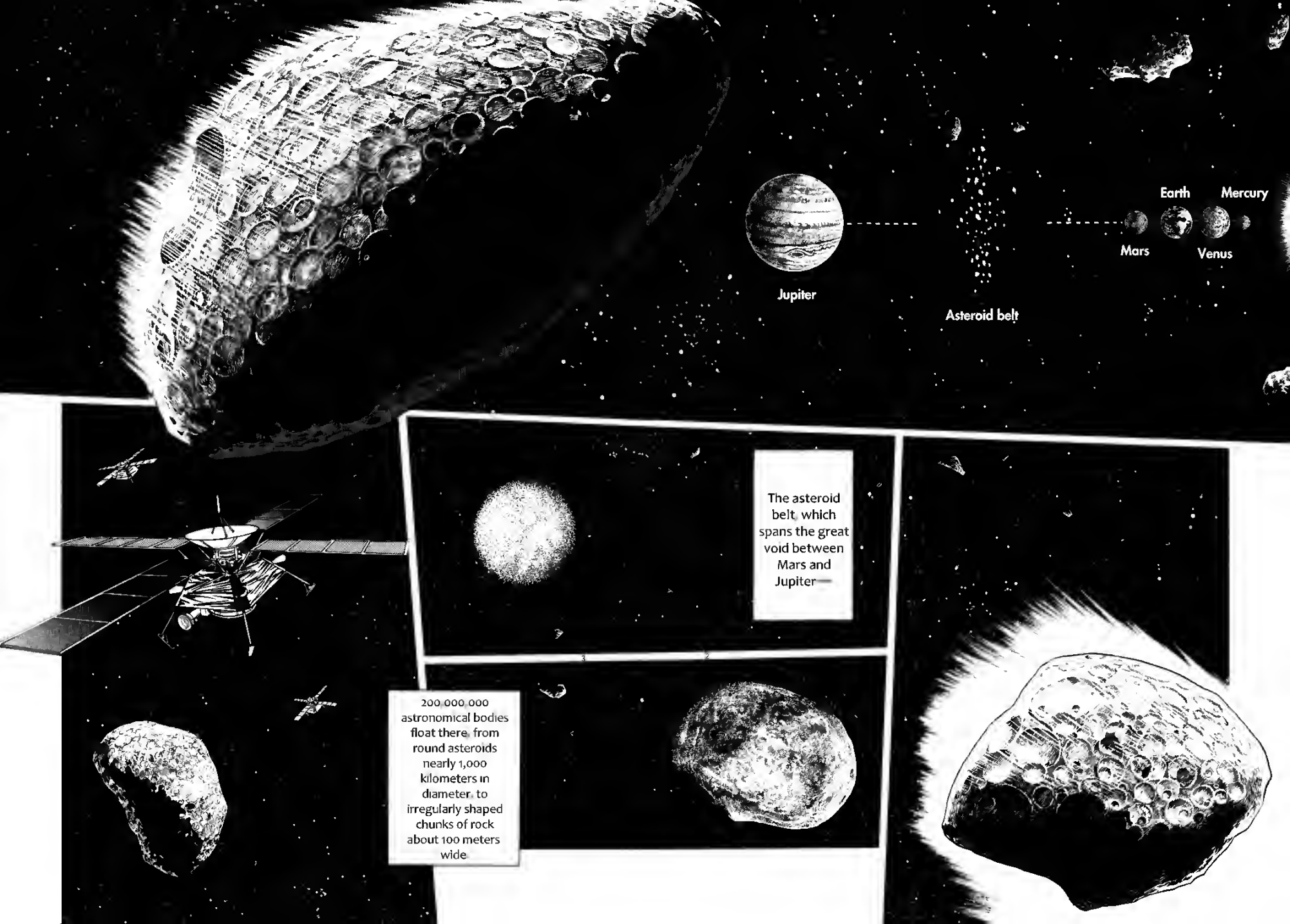

WHAT ARE THESE CASES?
BRING THAT CONTAINER-LOOKING THING ON THE FLOOR INTO FOCUS.
22
THEY MIGHT BE PRESERVED IN THESE PACKS LIKE CANS. LIKE YOU COULD JUST HEAT THEM UP AND EAT...
F... FISH!?

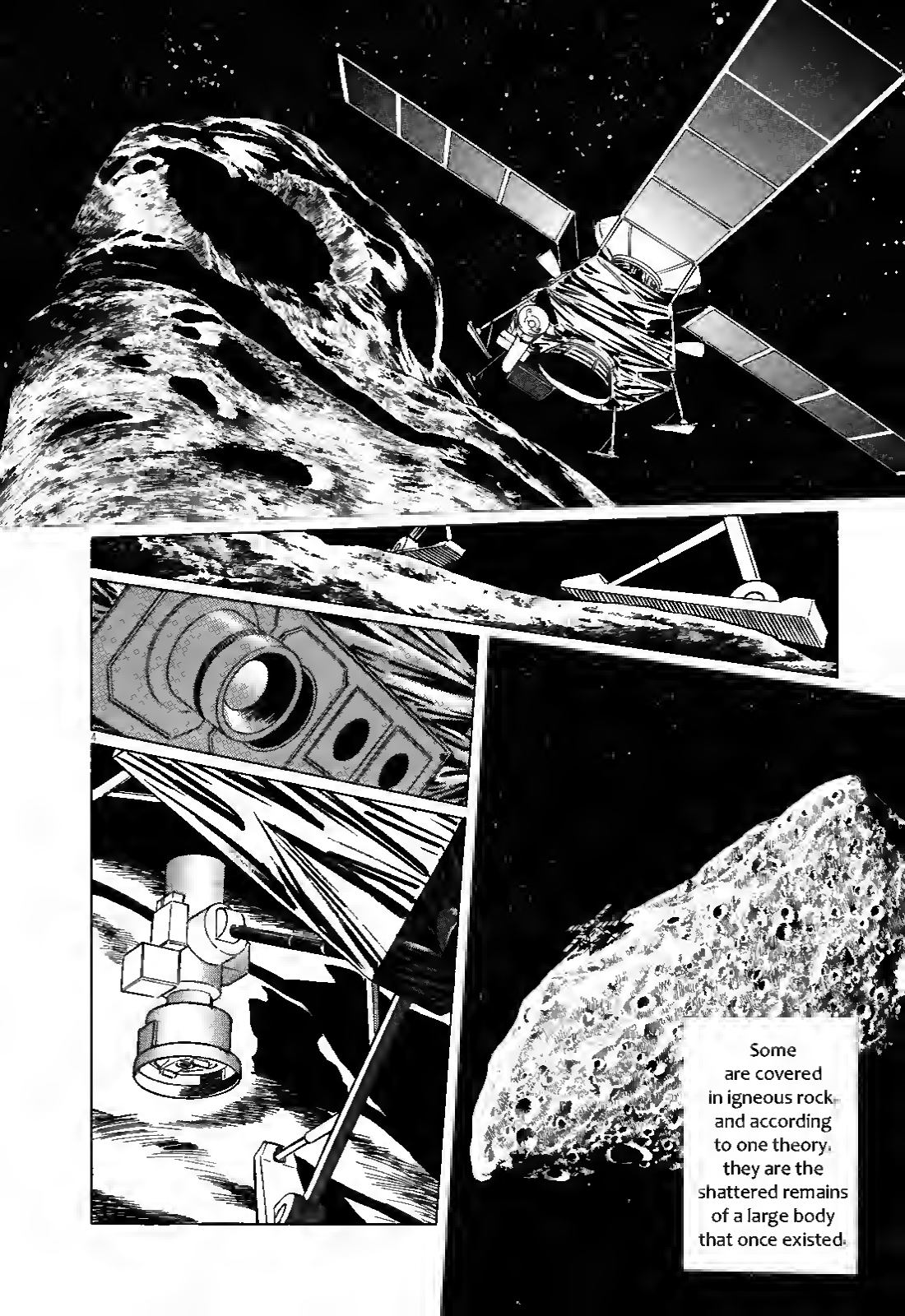
ROGER.
AT ANY RATE, THEY AREN'T LIKE ANY FISH I'VE EVER SEEN. GREY, EXPAND IT FOR ME.
SEND THE DATA ON THIS FISH TO COPERNICUS III, RIGHT AWAY!
I WANT TO HEAR PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER'S OPINION!


DR. HUNT, THIS FISH... DOESN'T BELONG TO THE VERTE-BRATES——
IT'S AN UNKNOWN ORGANISM, WITH NO CONNECTION TO THE EARTH AT ALL...!
AND IT DIDN'T EVOLVE FROM ANY LIFE ON EARTH.

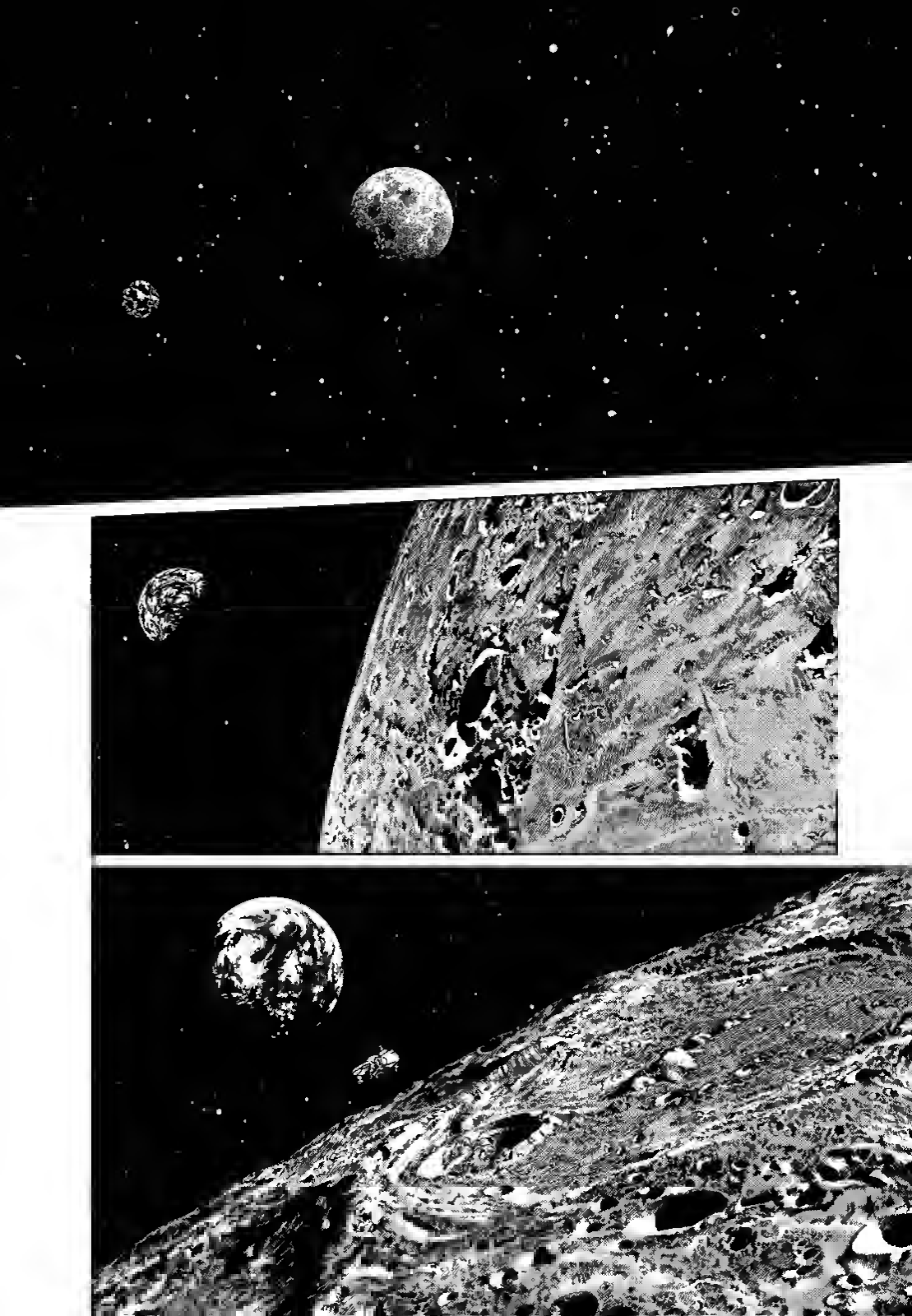
Chapter 4 ...
Minerva

Scanning & Typesetting: GDpX
Translation: [redacted]
Editing: Nirouryu
Quality Check: Kuhrow
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@ircirchighway.net


Jupiter
Asteroid belt
Mars
Earth
Venus
Mercury
The asteroid belt, which spans the great void between Mars and Jupiter—
200,000,000 astronomical bodies float there, from round asteroids nearly 1,000 kilometers in diameter, to irregularly shaped chunks of rock about 100 meters wide.

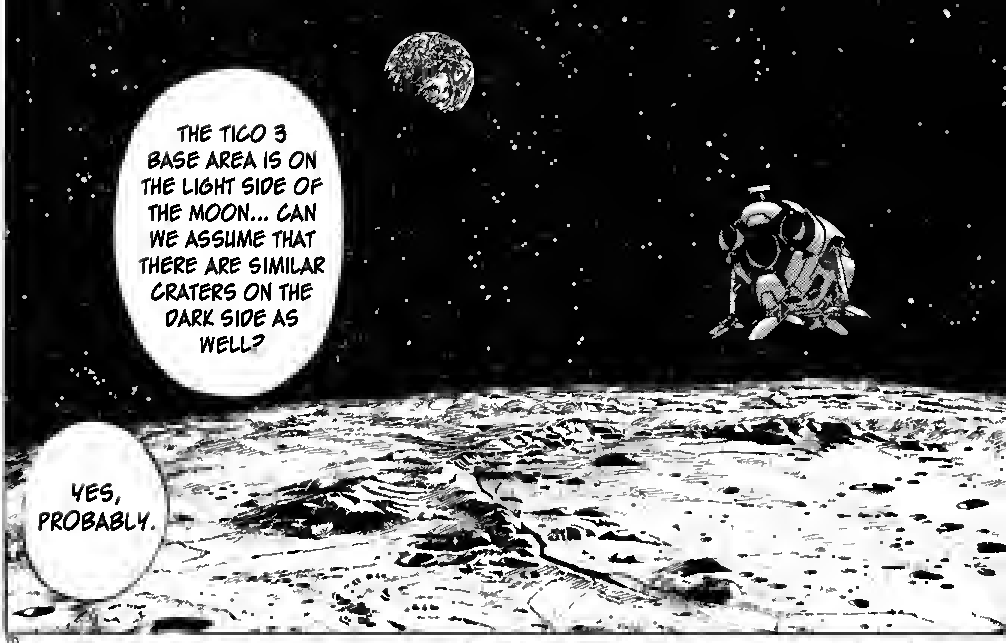

Some are covered in igneous rock, and according to one theory, they are the shattered remains of a large body that once existed.

UNSA EXPLORATORY PROBE ILIAD III, COMMENCING SAMPLING OF ASTEROID SURFACE.
SIMPLE ANALYSIS COMPLETE. TRANSMITTING DATA TO LUNAR BASE...

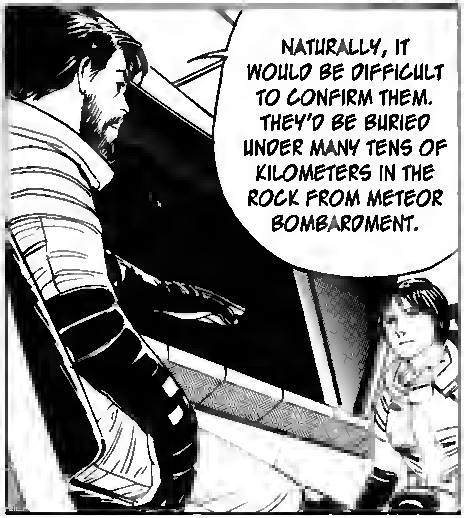


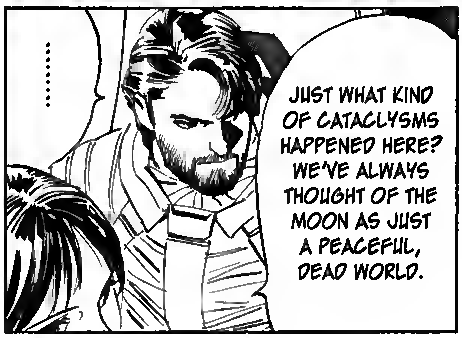
WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU IS THE PROBLEMATIC CRATER, MB-3076/K2/E.
AT FIRST GLANCE, THERE'S NOTHING DIFFERENTIATING FROM AN ORDINARY METEOR CRATER. BUT WE FOUND THE THREE ELEMENTS HYPERIUM, BONNEVILLIUM, AND GENEVIUM IN OUR INVESTIGATION OF THE AREA.
IN OTHER WORDS, THIS CRATER IS FROM A SUPER-FUSION BOMB!

.....
WE'VE CONFIRMED THREE SIMILAR CRATERS AROUND THE TICO 3 BASE.
THAT'S RIGHT. OVER AT COPERNICUS 3, I HEARD THAT TANKS AND WEAPONS WERE BURIED, SO WE'RE TELLING YOU BECAUSE WE THOUGHT THEY MIGHT BE RELATED.
SO THERE WAS A NUCLEAR WAR ON THE MOON 50,000 YEARS AGO...?

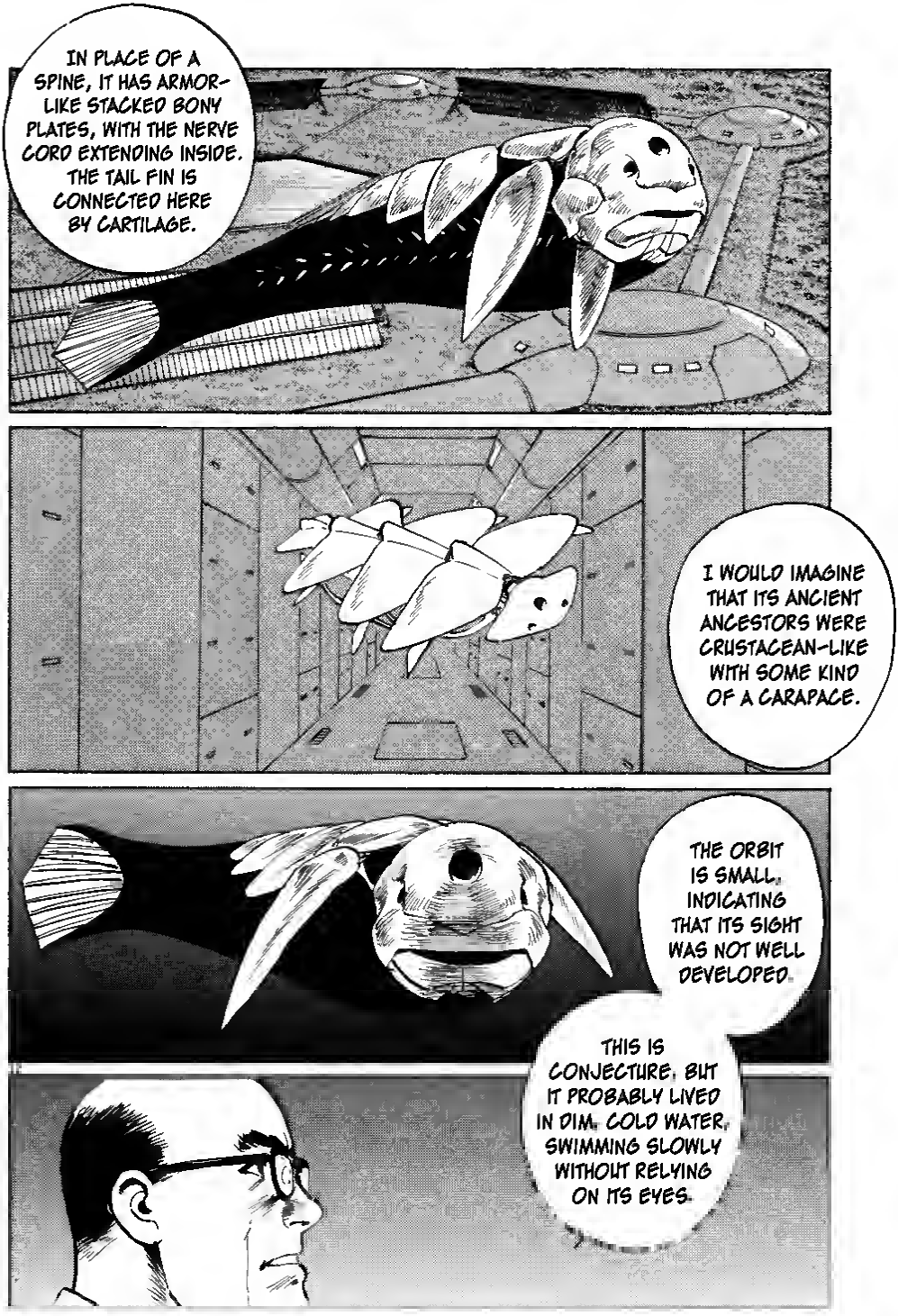

THE TICO 3 BASE AREA IS ON THE LIGHT SIDE OF THE MOON... CAN WE ASSUME THAT THERE ARE SIMILAR CRATERS ON THE DARK SIDE AS WELL?
YES, PROBABLY.

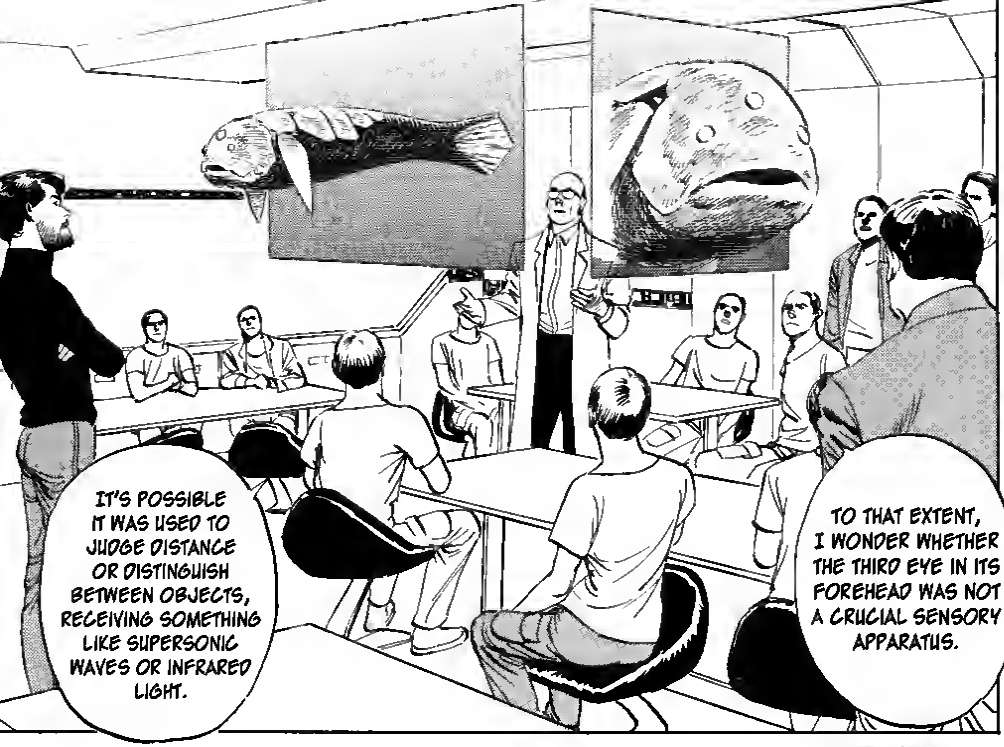
SHOW ME THE NEXT CRATER...


NATURALLY, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CONFIRM THEM. THEY'D BE BURIED UNDER MANY TENS OF KILOMETERS IN THE ROCK FROM METEOR BOMBARDMENT.


.....
JUST WHAT KIND OF CATACLYSMS HAPPENED HERE? WE'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF THE MOON AS JUST A PEACEFUL, DEAD WORLD.

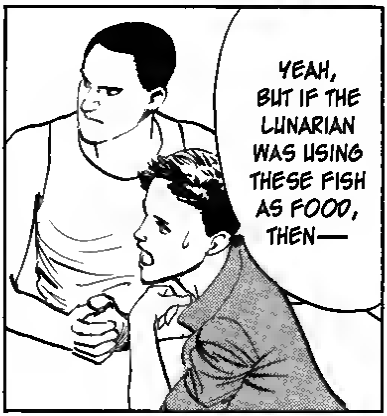
THIS FISH ISN'T A VERTEBRATE, AND SAYING IT'S NOT AGILE WOULD BE PUTTING IT CHARITABLY.

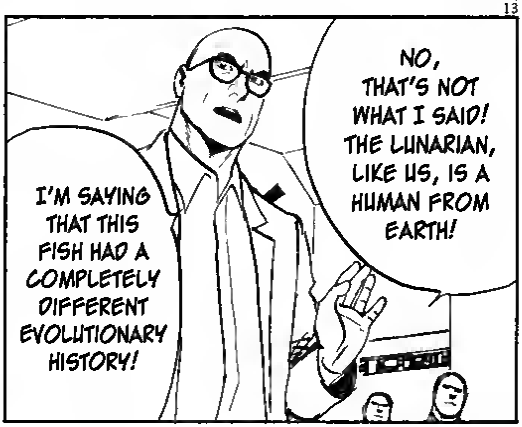

IN PLACE OF A SPINE, IT HAS ARMOR-LIKE STACKED BONY PLATES, WITH THE NERVE CORD EXTENDING INSIDE. THE TAIL FIN IS CONNECTED HERE BY CARTILAGE.
I WOULD IMAGINE THAT ITS ANCIENT ANCESTORS WERE CRUSTACEAN-LIKE WITH SOME KIND OF A CARAPACE.
THE ORBIT IS SMALL, INDICATING THAT ITS SIGHT WAS NOT WELL DEVELOPED.
THIS IS CONJECTURE, BUT IT PROBABLY LIVED IN DIM, COLD WATER, SWIMMING SLOWLY WITHOUT RELYING ON ITS EYES.


IT'S POSSIBLE IT WAS USED TO JUDGE DISTANCE OR DISTINGUISH BETWEEN OBJECTS, RECEIVING SOMETHING LIKE SUPERSONIC WAVES OR INFRARED LIGHT.
TO THAT EXTENT, I WONDER WHETHER THE THIRD EYE IN ITS FOREHEAD WAS NOT A CRUCIAL SENSORY APPARATUS.

SO BASICALLY, THE LUNARIANS WERE LIVING ON THE PLANET THIS UNKNOWN FISH WAS SWIMMING AROUND IN?
UHM, PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER.

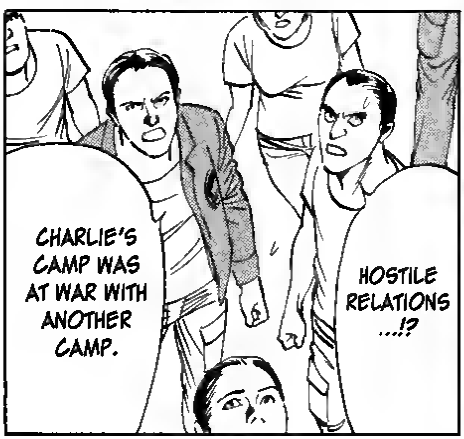
13

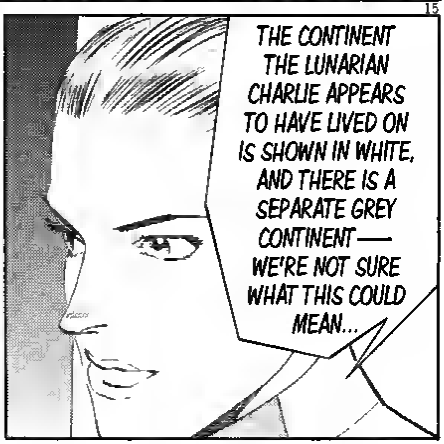

YEAH, BUT IF THE LUNARIAN WAS USING THESE FISH AS FOOD, THEN—


I'M SAYING THAT THIS FISH HAD A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY!
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID! THE LUNARIAN, LIKE US, IS A HUMAN FROM EARTH!

DIRECTOR GENERAL GRACE CALDWELL HERE. I'LL BE JOINING THE DEBRIEFING FROM EARTH.
THERE'S NO GUARANTEE THOSE TANKS AND FOOD BELONGED TO THE LUNARIAN. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT SOME OTHER ALIENS CAME TO THE MOON AND BATTLED THE LUNARIANS.
SOMETHING RESEMBLING A PRINTED MAP WAS FOUND IN THE LUNARIAN'S NOTEPADS WE RESTORED WITH THE TRIMAGNISCOPE.
WE STILL HAVEN'T DECIPHERED IT, BUT THE LETTERS LOOK LIKE PLACE NAMES AND GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES. HOWEVER, I'M TOLD THERE'S NO CONFIGURATION OF THESE LANDMASSES THAT MATCHES ANY PLACE ON PRESENT-DAY EARTH.
THIS NEXT GRAPHIC IS A 3D VIEW ON A PLANETARY SCALE—

15

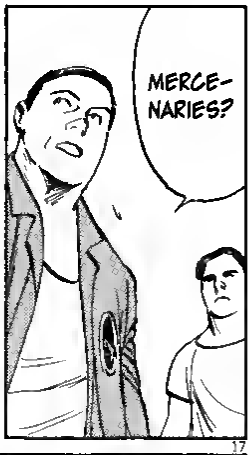

CHARLIE'S CAMP WAS AT WAR WITH ANOTHER CAMP.
HOSTILE RELATIONS ...!?


THE CONTINENT THE LUNARIAN CHARLIE APPEARS TO HAVE LIVED ON IS SHOWN IN WHITE, AND THERE IS A SEPARATE GREY CONTINENT— WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT THIS COULD MEAN...

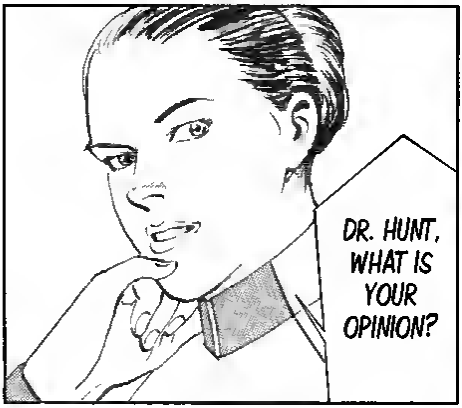
ORIC ZERTOF FROM RUSSIA! HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT EARTH 50,000 YEARS AGO? IF THE EARTH'S AXIS SHIFTED AND THE COASTLINES SANK DUE TO NUCLEAR WAR, THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD TELL THE ORIGINAL TERRAIN!
I'M LUNE CRANE FROM LYON UNIVERSITY.
ARE YOU SAYING THE WAR BETWEEN THE LUNARIANS ON THAT PLANET SPARKED CONFLICT EVEN SO FAR AWAY AS THE MOON?
WE'RE JUST GOING IN CIRCLES! FIRST WE HAVE TO CLEAR UP WHETHER THE LUNARIAN IS AN EARTHLING OR FROM ANOTHER PLANET!
IT ALL BURNED AWAY!
IMPOSSIBLE! WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO DIG AND FIND THE REMAINS OF A CIVILIZATION CAPABLE OF SPACEFARING WAR!?
HE'S FROM EARTH!
GWANJI, FROM THE SOUTH AFRICA ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING...

THE LUNARIANS WERE HUMANS ABDUCTED FROM THE EARTH BY ALIENS——
——RECEIVING TRAINING ON ANOTHER PLANET, THEY WERE MADE INTO THE ALIENS' "MERCENARIES", AND SENT TO THE BATTLEFIELDS ON THE MOON'S SURFACE——

IT ALL ADDS UP. HUMANS FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO WERE ON THE SAME LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE AS MODERN MAN. IF YOU TRAINED THEM, THEY COULD BE USED AS SOLDIERS.
JUST LIKE THE AFRICANS WERE TAKEN AWAY AS SLAVES...


MERCE-NARIES?

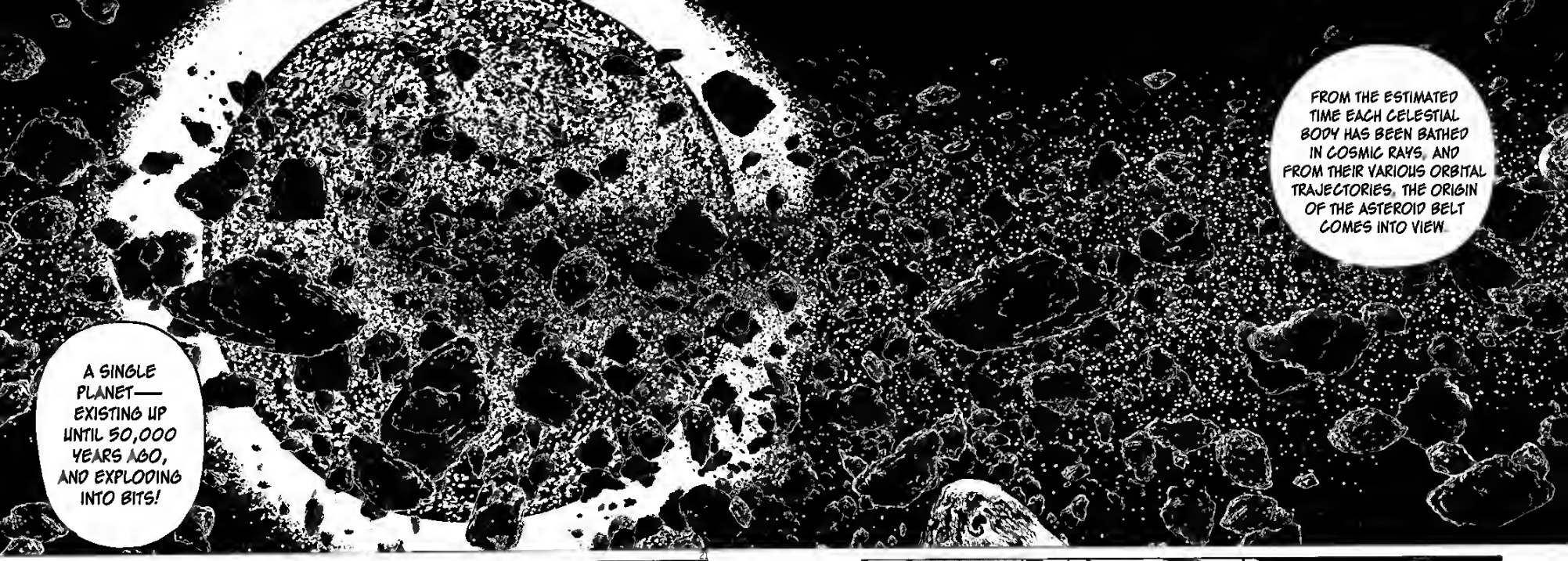
17


DR. HUNT, WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?

.....

...I'M STILL MILES AWAY FROM BEING ABLE TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING, BUT——
SO I'M UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE THEORY THAT HOMO SAPIENS WERE MADE TO FIGHT IN SOME TAILOR-MADE EQUIPMENT.
JUDGING FROM THE DESIGN OF THE TANKS, WEAPONS, AND CHARLIE'S SPACESUIT, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO THINK THEIR SENSE IS VERY FAR FROM OUR OWN. IT JUST SMELLS LIKE THEY WERE MADE BY THE SAME "HUMANS".
.....
ALLOWING AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION, IT MEANS THE LUNARIANS WERE "HUMANS", LIVING ON ANOTHER PLANET, FIGHTING WITH THEIR OWN WEAPONS!

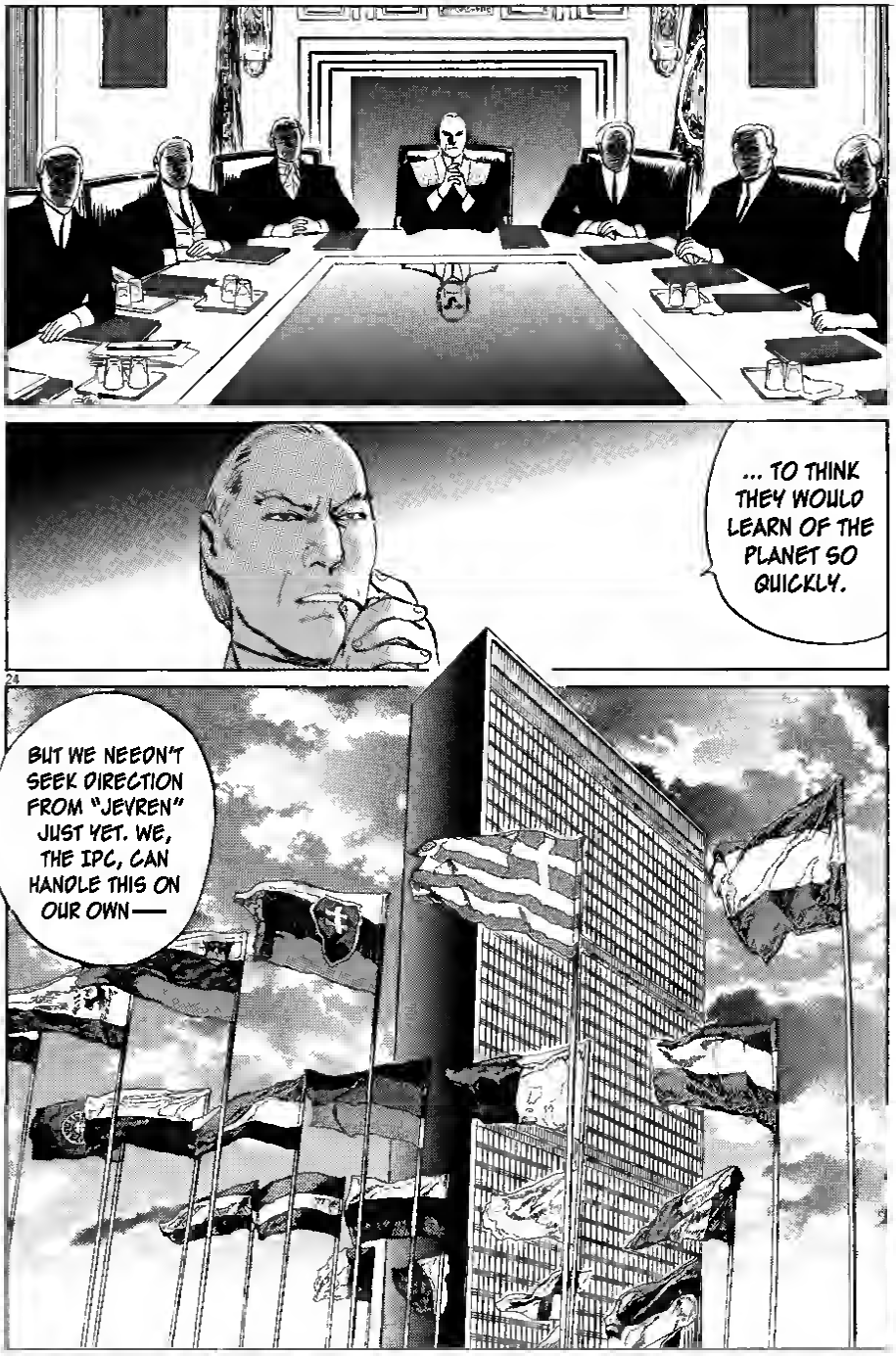
I HAD COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT IN ALL THE COMMOTION, BUT THE FIVE "ILIAD" PROBES WE LAUNCHED HALF A YEAR AGO FROM THE MOON HAVE RETURNED SOME DATA.
WE'LL DEAL WITH THE CONTRADICTION LATER, PROFESSOR. LET'S JUST ACCEPT THE FACTS FOR NOW, OKAY?
SURPRISINGLY, WE LEARNED THAT MANY OF THE ASTEROIDS BETWEEN MARS AND JUPITER FORMED VERY RECENTLY—


A SINGLE PLANET—— EXISTING UP UNTIL 50,000 YEARS AGO, AND EXPLODING INTO BITS!
FROM THE ESTIMATED TIME EACH CELESTIAL BODY HAS BEEN BATHED IN COSMIC RAYS, AND FROM THEIR VARIOUS ORBITAL TRAJECTORIES, THE ORIGIN OF THE ASTEROID BELT COMES INTO VIEW.

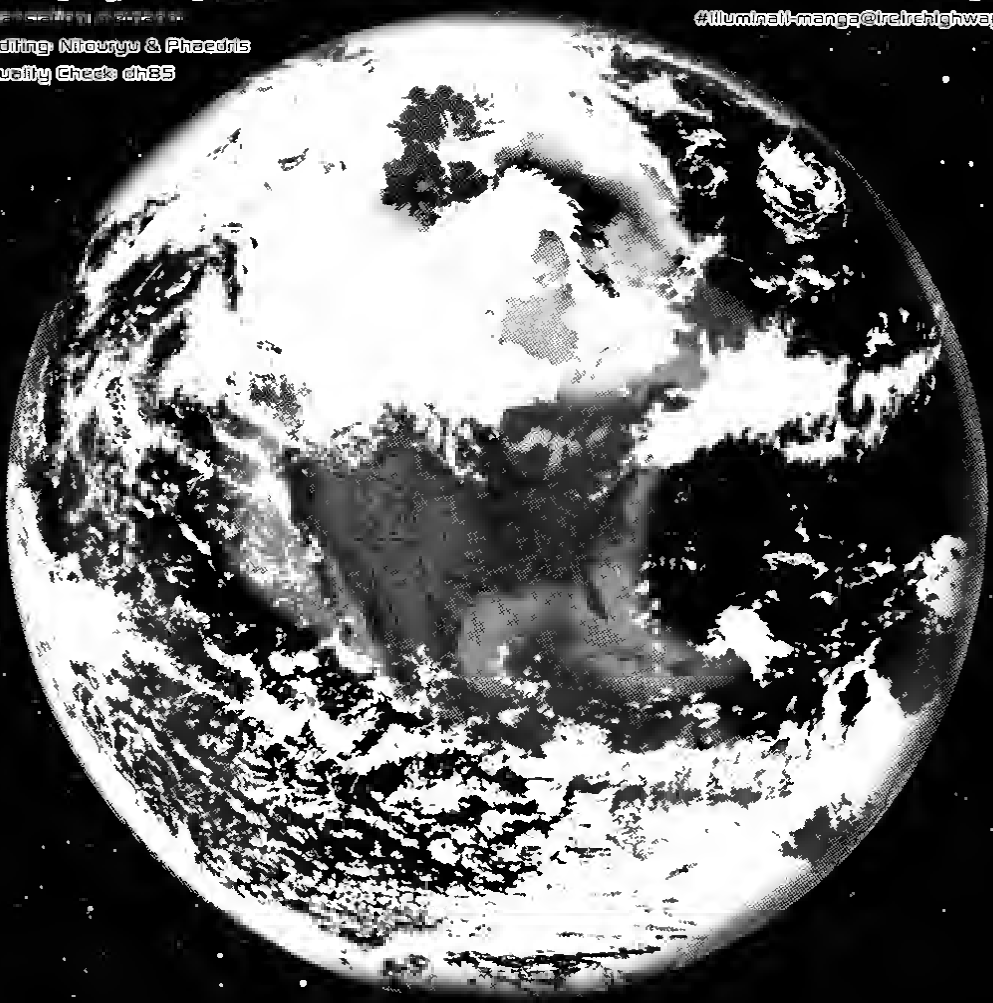
FOR SOME REASON, WAR BROKE OUT, AND THE PLANET ITSELF WAS DESTROYED BY A VOLLEY OF SUPERWEAPONS THAT EVEN AFFECTED THE MOON.

20
AND PROBABLY OF THE LUNARIAN, CHARLIE, AS WELL.
THIS PLANET, THE ORIGINAL FIFTH PLANET, BEING FURTHER OUT THAN MARS, THE FOURTH PLANET IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM, MUST BE THE HOMELAND OF THE FISH WE'VE SEEN.

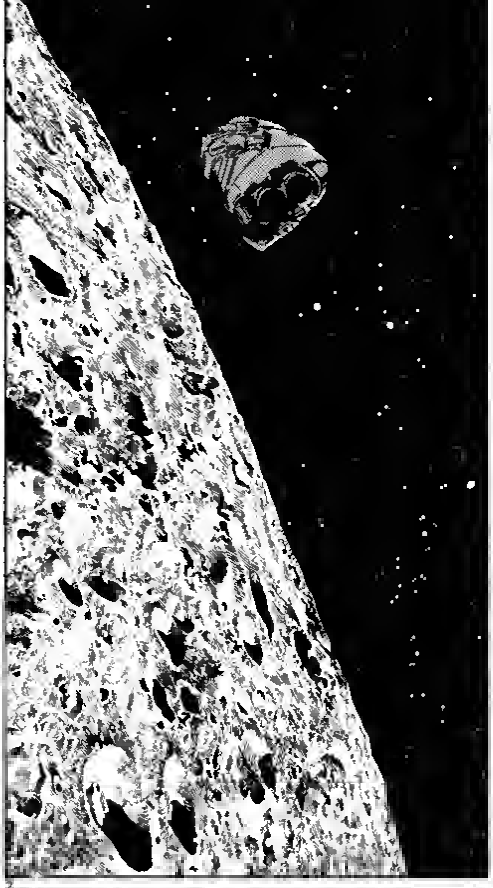
THE SOLAR SYSTEM HAS A HISTORY WE WERE UTTERLY UNAWARE OF——!!
BORROWING THE GODDESS OF KNOWLEDGE FROM ROMAN MYTHOLOGY, I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE WE NAME THIS PLANET "MINERVA".

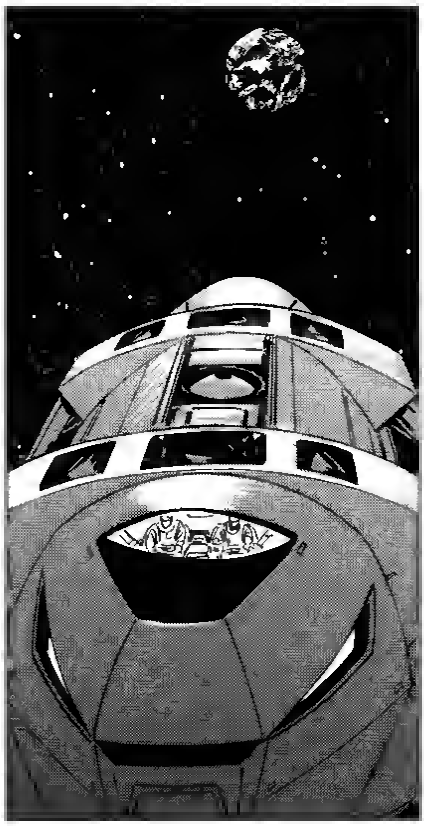

... TO THINK THEY WOULD LEARN OF THE PLANET SO QUICKLY.
24
BUT WE NEEDN'T SEEK DIRECTION FROM "JEVREN" JUST YET. WE, THE IPC, CAN HANDLE THIS ON OUR OWN——

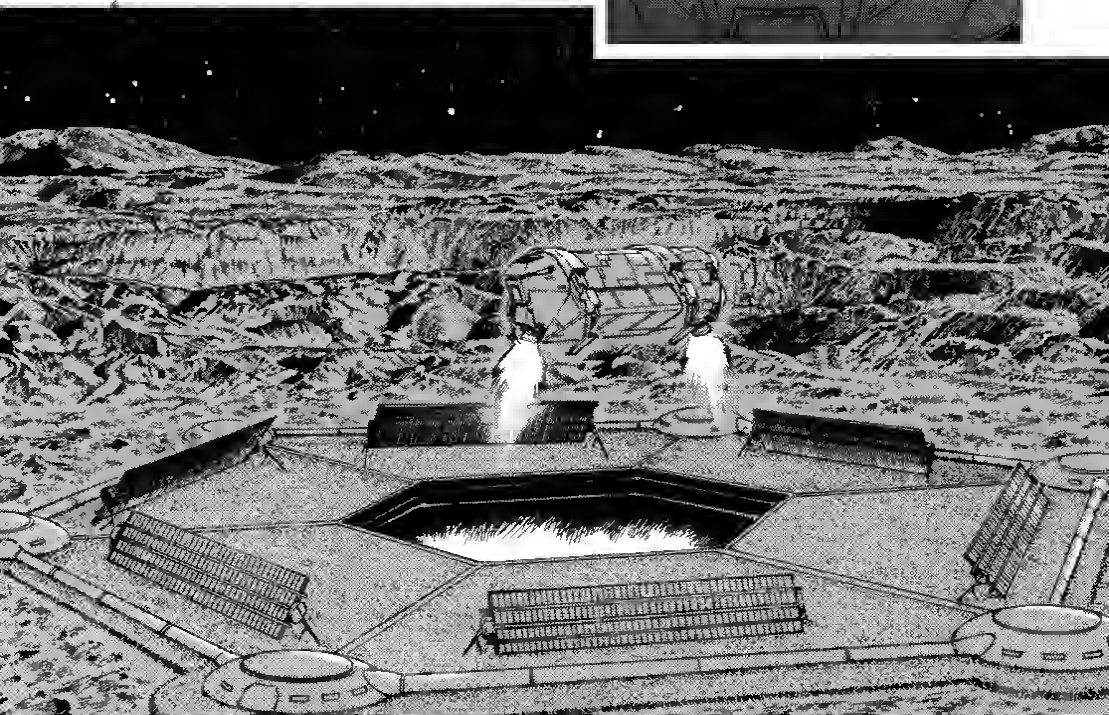
Scanning & Typesetting: [redacted]
Editing: Nirouryu & Phaedris
Quality Check: dh85
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@freirchighway.net



Chapter 5 ...
Jupiter 5



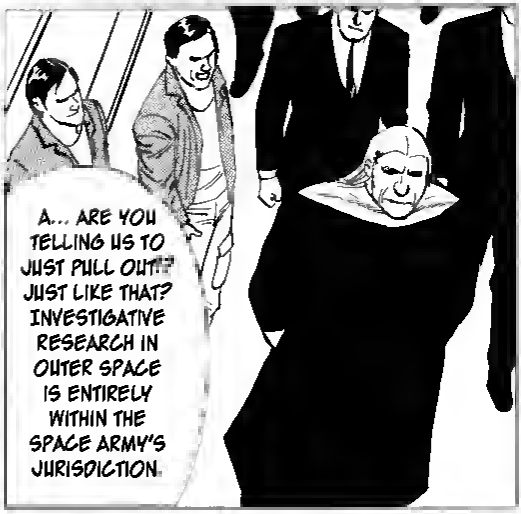


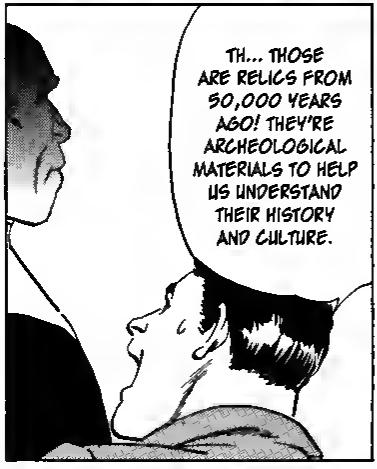


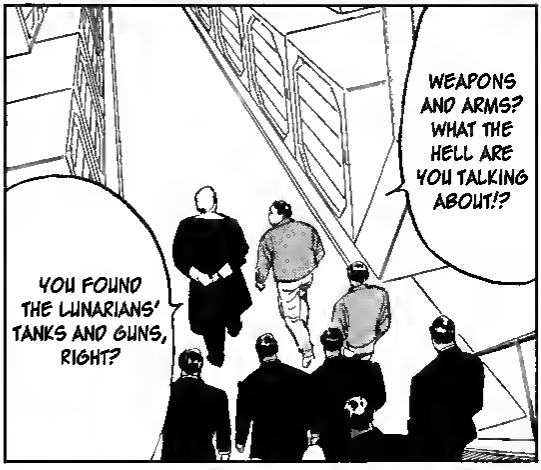
WELLICOFF.
IPC.

TAKING OVER!?
WE'RE GOING TO BE COMPLETELY TAKING OVER THE LUNARIAN RESEARCH HAPPENING HERE ON COPERNICUS 3.

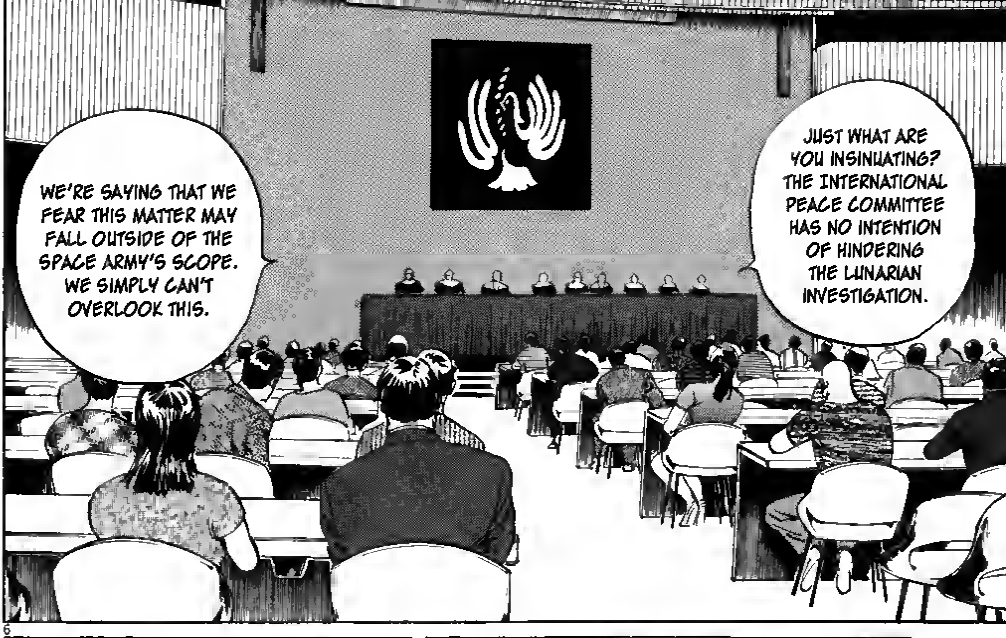
WITH ONE EXCEPTION. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF WEAPONS AND ARMS IS FORBIDDEN!


A... ARE YOU TELLING US TO JUST PULL OUT!? JUST LIKE THAT? INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH IN OUTER SPACE IS ENTIRELY WITHIN THE SPACE ARMY'S JURISDICTION.


TH... THOSE ARE RELICS FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO! THEY'RE ARCHEOLOGICAL MATERIALS TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE.

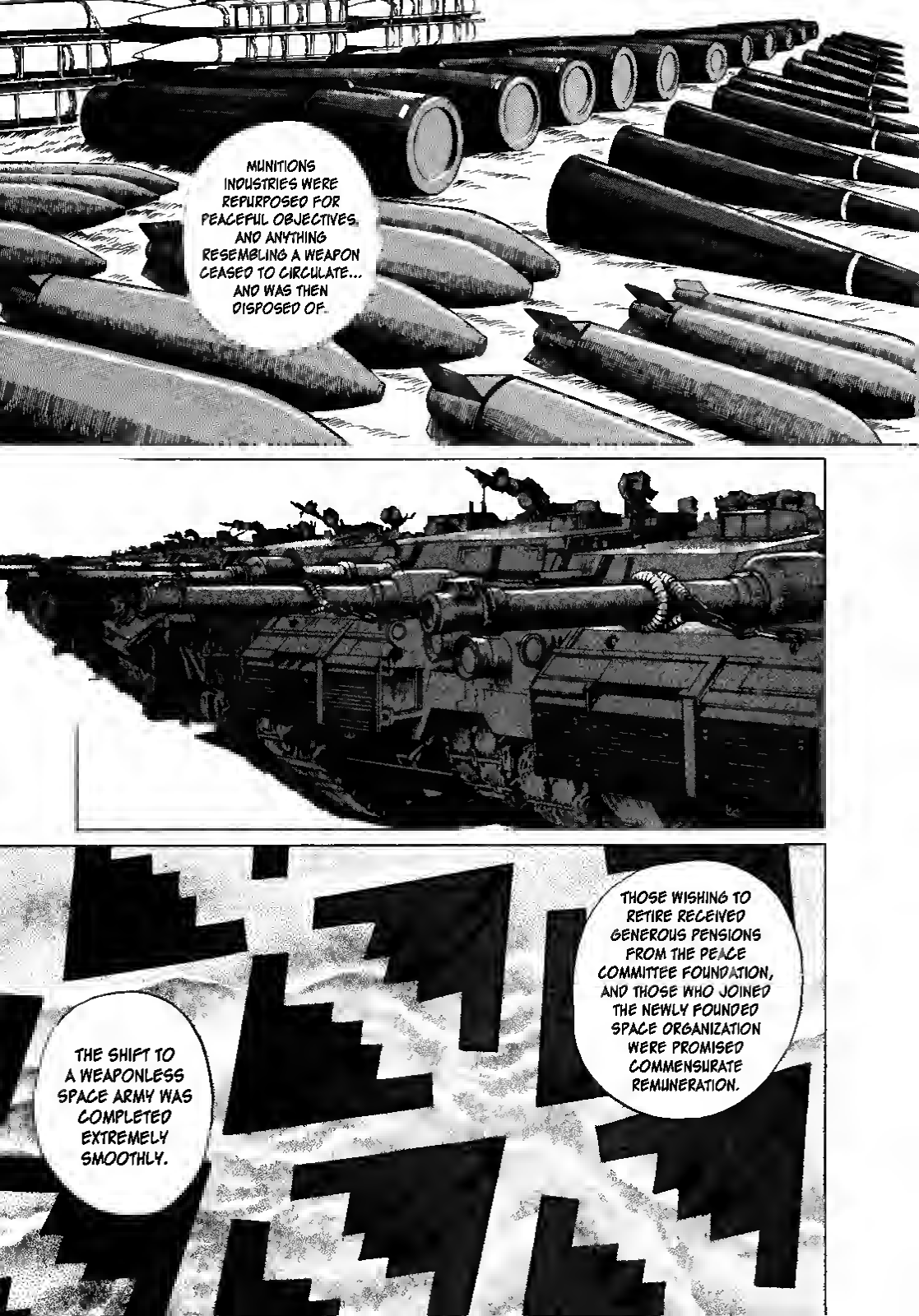

WEAPONS AND ARMS? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!?
YOU FOUND THE LUNARIANS' TANKS AND GUNS, RIGHT?

IF THE LUNARIANS HAD ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY, THEN THE SAME WOULD BE TRUE OF THEIR WEAPONS. AND THE SPACE ARMY BASICALLY IS NOT PERMITTED TO STUDY WEAPONS!
... THE LUNARIAN DISCOVERY AND MINERVA HYPOTHESIS HAVE ROCKED THE WORLD. WHY HINDER THE INVESTIGATION AT A TIME LIKE THIS?

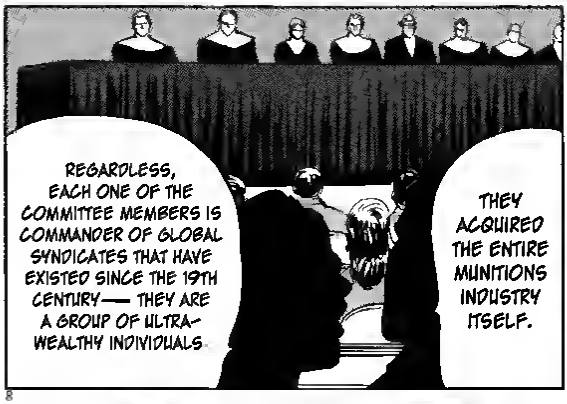

WE'RE SAYING THAT WE FEAR THIS MATTER MAY FALL OUTSIDE OF THE SPACE ARMY'S SCOPE. WE SIMPLY CAN'T OVERLOOK THIS.
JUST WHAT ARE YOU INSINUATING? THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE HAS NO INTENTION OF HINDERING THE LUNARIAN INVESTIGATION.

REMEMBER. THE SPACE ARMY WAS FOUNDED WHEN THE WORLD'S MILITARY FORCES DISCARDED THEIR ARMS AND DISBANDED.

WE VOWED NEVER TO TAKE UP ARMS AGAIN, BY THE COLLECTIVE WILL OF ALL HUMANITY.

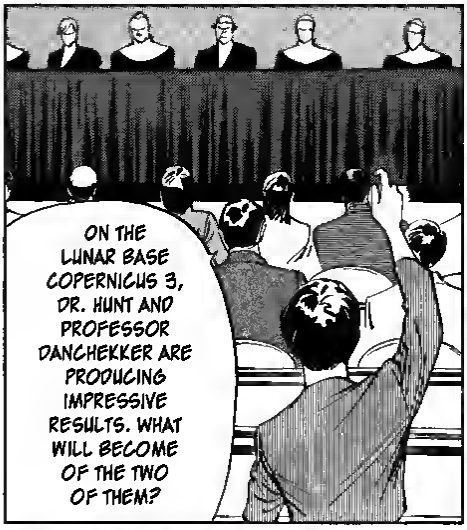

MUNITIONS INDUSTRIES WERE REPURPOSED FOR PEACEFUL OBJECTIVES, AND ANYTHING RESEMBLING A WEAPON CEASED TO CIRCULATE... AND WAS THEN DISPOSED OF.
THOSE WISHING TO RETIRE RECEIVED GENEROUS PENSIONS FROM THE PEACE COMMITTEE FOUNDATION, AND THOSE WHO JOINED THE NEWLY FOUNDED SPACE ORGANIZATION WERE PROMISED COMMENSURATE REMUNERATION.
THE SHIFT TO A WEAPONLESS SPACE ARMY WAS COMPLETED EXTREMELY SMOOTHLY.

THE WORLD'S CONFLICTS BECAME AVOIDABLE THROUGH FOREIGN RELATIONS AND ECONOMIC AID. WE WERE EVEN SUCCESSFUL AT SUPPRESSING TERRORISM BY BUYING UP THE AMMUNITION...!!


REGARDLESS, EACH ONE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS IS COMMANDER OF GLOBAL SYNDICATES THAT HAVE EXISTED SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY—— THEY ARE A GROUP OF ULTRA-WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS.
THEY ACQUIRED THE ENTIRE MUNITIONS INDUSTRY ITSELF.

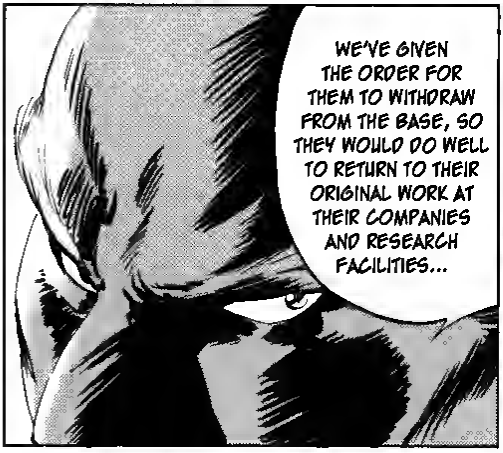
ALTHOUGH THE WORD IS THEY BOUGHT PEACE WITH A WAD OF BILLS...

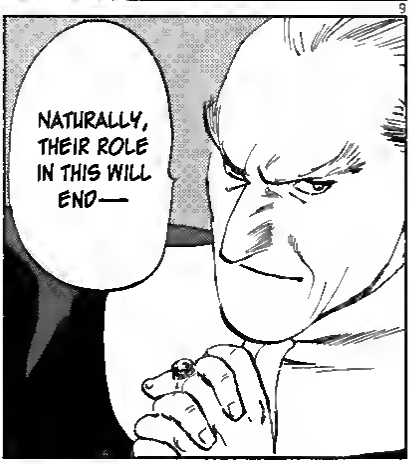
CHAIRMAN SORENSEN, I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BUT—


ON THE LUNAR BASE COPERNICUS 3, DR. HUNT AND PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER ARE PRODUCING IMPRESSIVE RESULTS. WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE TWO OF THEM?

AND THIS IS HOW WE WON PEACE FOR THE WORLD. THE SPACE ARMY MUST STRICTLY DISTANCE ITSELF FROM ARMAMENTS FROM HERE ON OUT.

9


WE'VE GIVEN THE ORDER FOR THEM TO WITHDRAW FROM THE BASE, SO THEY WOULD DO WELL TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL WORK AT THEIR COMPANIES AND RESEARCH FACILITIES...


NATURALLY, THEIR ROLE IN THIS WILL END—

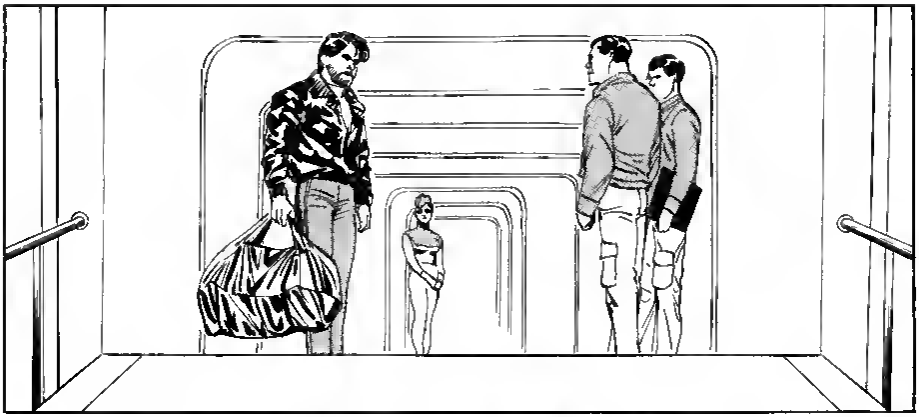
"GO BACK"?
WE WILL ACCEPT YOUR DONATION OF THE TRIMAGNISCOPE— AND ALL OF THE DATA ON THE LUNARIAN AND THE WEAPONS.
TO BE PRECISE, DR. HUNT, THAT'S NOT QUITE IT.
I'M HERE ON BEHALF OF THE SPACE ARMY. I'M GONNA TALK WITH DIVISION CHIEF CALDWELL...
IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S MORE LIKE... "LEAVE ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING HERE AND GO BACK TO EARTH".
THE CHIEF HAS ALREADY BEEN INFORMED. AFTER ALL, THE PEACE COMMITTEE IS SOVEREIGN OVER THE SPACE ARMY. THEY CAN'T CONTRAVENE US.

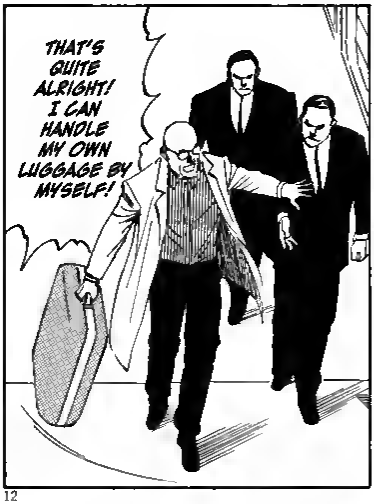
YOU CUT QUITE A FIGURE, DON'T YOU? MAYBE YOU WOULD HAVE MADE A BETTER WRESTLER THAN A WEALTHY CHAIRPERSON.

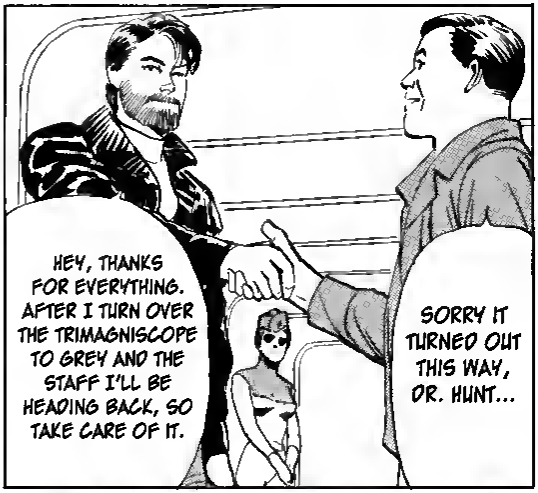
.....

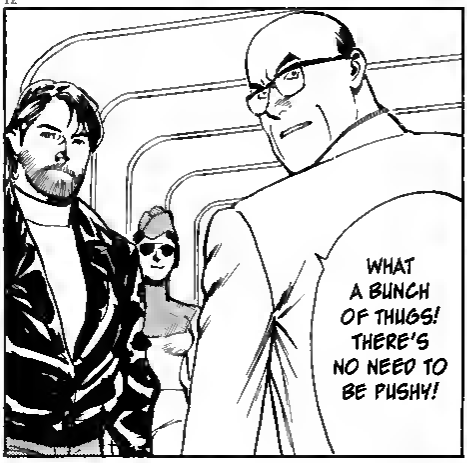
I'M JUST BORN WITH IT. IF YOU'D LIKE, WE CAN HAVE A LITTLE MATCH RIGHT HERE.

MAYBE NEXT TIME. HEHEH...



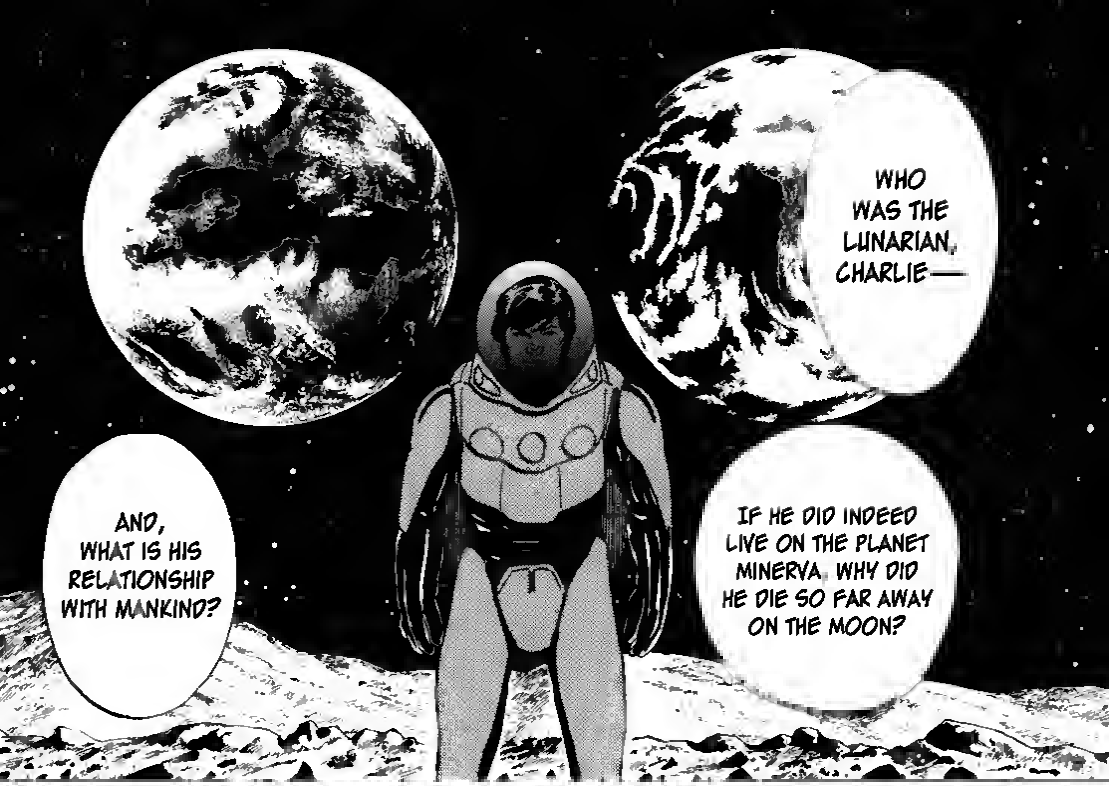

THAT'S QUITE ALRIGHT! I CAN HANDLE MY OWN LUGGAGE BY MYSELF!

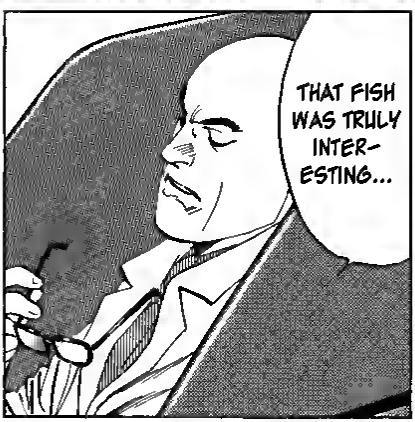

HEY, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING. AFTER I TURN OVER THE TRIMAGNISCOPE TO GREY AND THE STAFF I'LL BE HEADING BACK, SO TAKE CARE OF IT.
SORRY IT TURNED OUT THIS WAY, DR. HUNT...

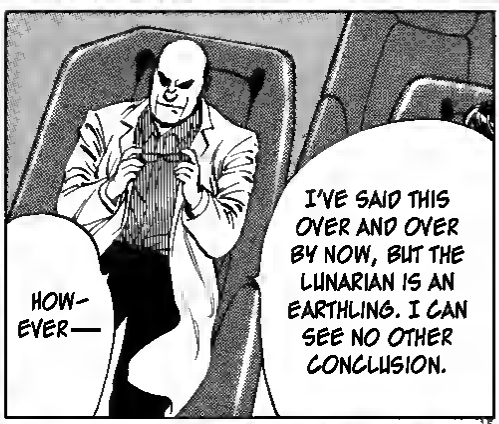

WHAT A BUNCH OF THUGS! THERE'S NO NEED TO BE PUSHY!

FOR THE LAST TIME, I CAN HANDLE IT!
IT'S TIME TO CHECK YOUR BAG NOW, PROFESSOR.

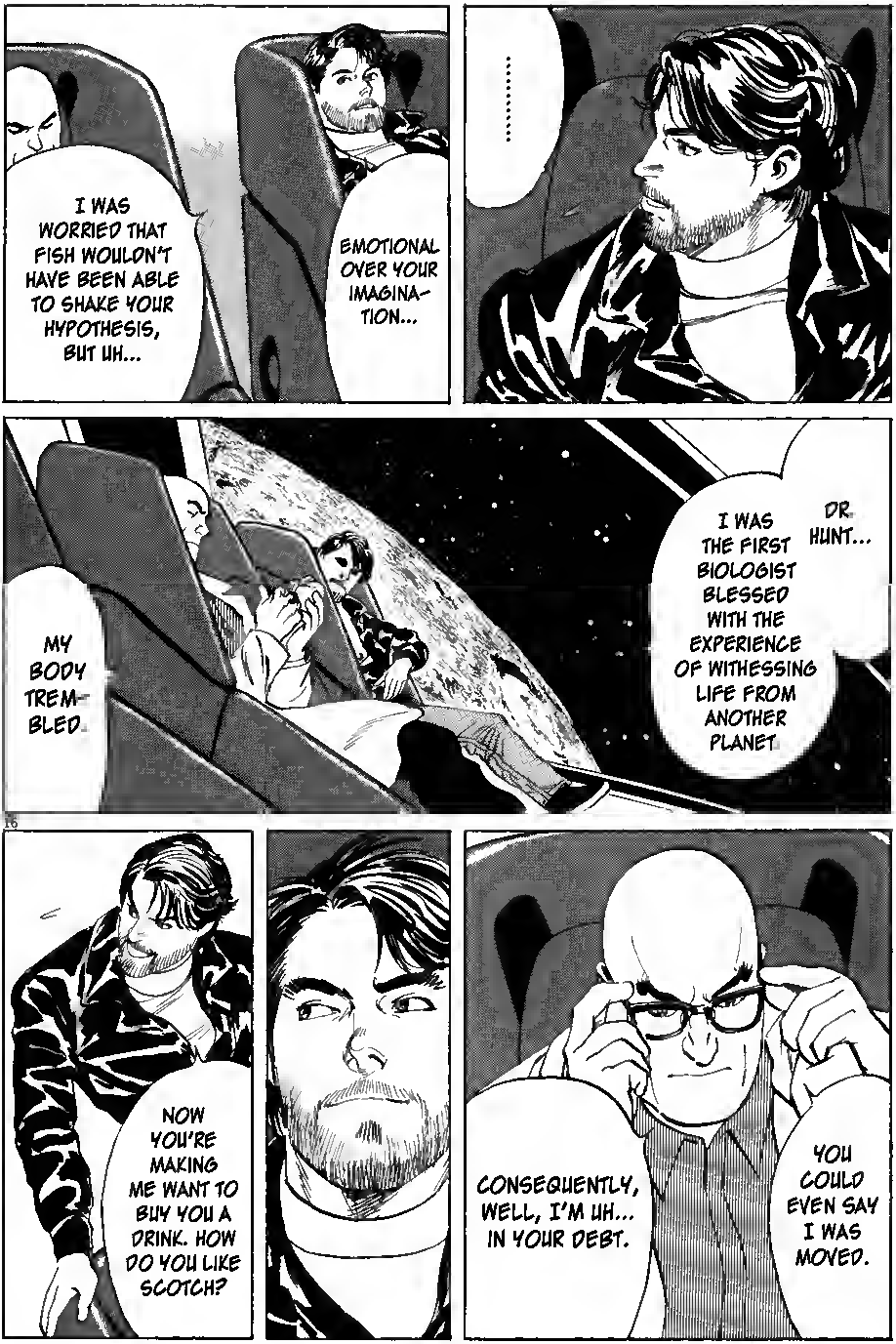
... MAN, THAT IS A REAL SHAME.
WE DISCOVERED SO MANY SURPRISES WHILE WE WERE ON THE MOON, BUT THE REAL MYSTERIES REMAIN JUST THAT...


WHO WAS THE LUNARIAN, CHARLIE—
IF HE DID INDEED LIVE ON THE PLANET MINERVA, WHY DID HE DIE SO FAR AWAY ON THE MOON?
AND, WHAT IS HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MANKIND?

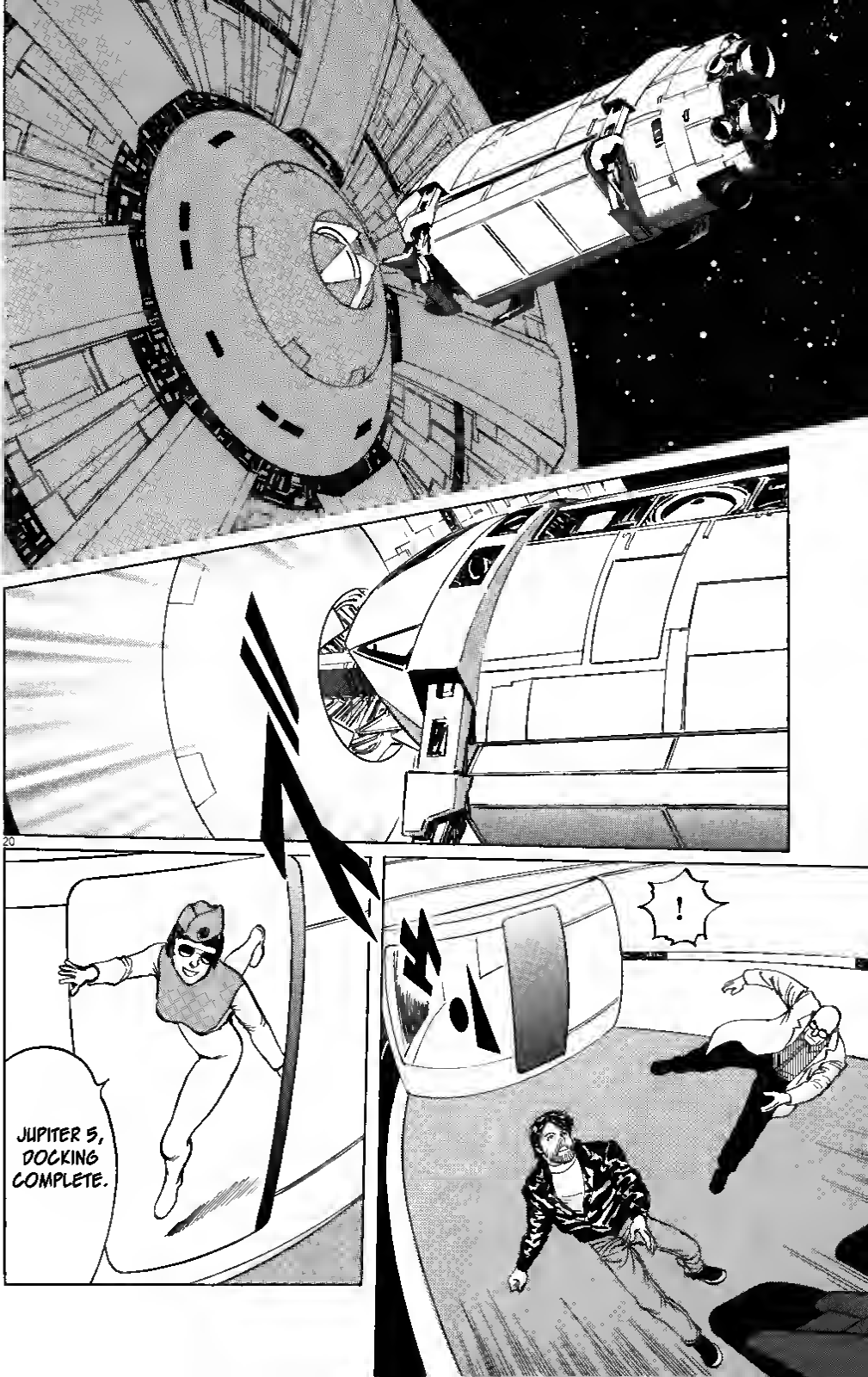

THAT FISH WAS TRULY INTER-ESTING...


I'VE SAID THIS OVER AND OVER BY NOW, BUT THE LUNARIAN IS AN EARTHLING. I CAN SEE NO OTHER CONCLUSION.
HOW-EVER—

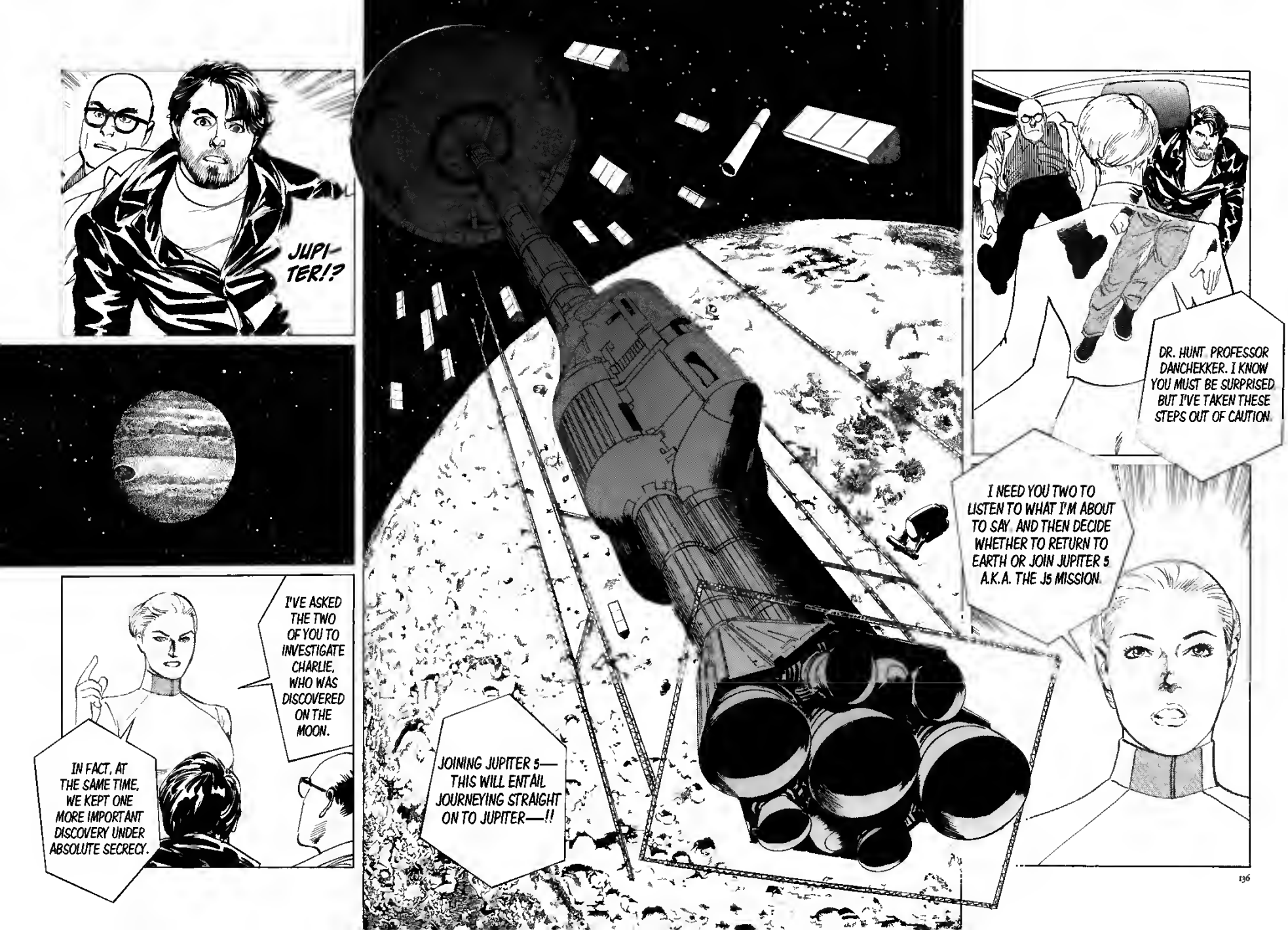
WHAT PROCESSES SHAPED THE BIRTH OF THAT FISH, IN A GENEALOGY COMPLETELY SEPARATE FROM THE EARTH'S?
WHAT KIND OF CREATURE WOULD IT GO ON TO EVOLVE INTO—
JUST IMAGINING THESE DIFFERENT THINGS MAKES ME, ERM, FEEL RATHER EMOTIONAL.


I WAS WORRIED THAT FISH WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SHAKE YOUR HYPOTHESIS, BUT UH...
EMOTIONAL OVER YOUR IMAGINATION...
.....
DR. HUNT...
I WAS THE FIRST BIOLOGIST BLESSED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF WITHESSING LIFE FROM ANOTHER PLANET.
MY BODY TREMBLED.
NOW YOU'RE MAKING ME WANT TO BUY YOU A DRINK. HOW DO YOU LIKE SCOTCH?
CONSEQUENTLY, WELL, I'M UH... IN YOUR DEBT.
YOU COULD EVEN SAY I WAS MOVED.

THAT'S WEIRD... AREN'T WE TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE MOON FOR A RETURN TRAJECTORY TO EARTH...?
NO... I DON'T REALLY DRINK—
WELL, HOW ABOUT TEA THEN...


JUPITER 5, DOCKING COMPLETE.
!

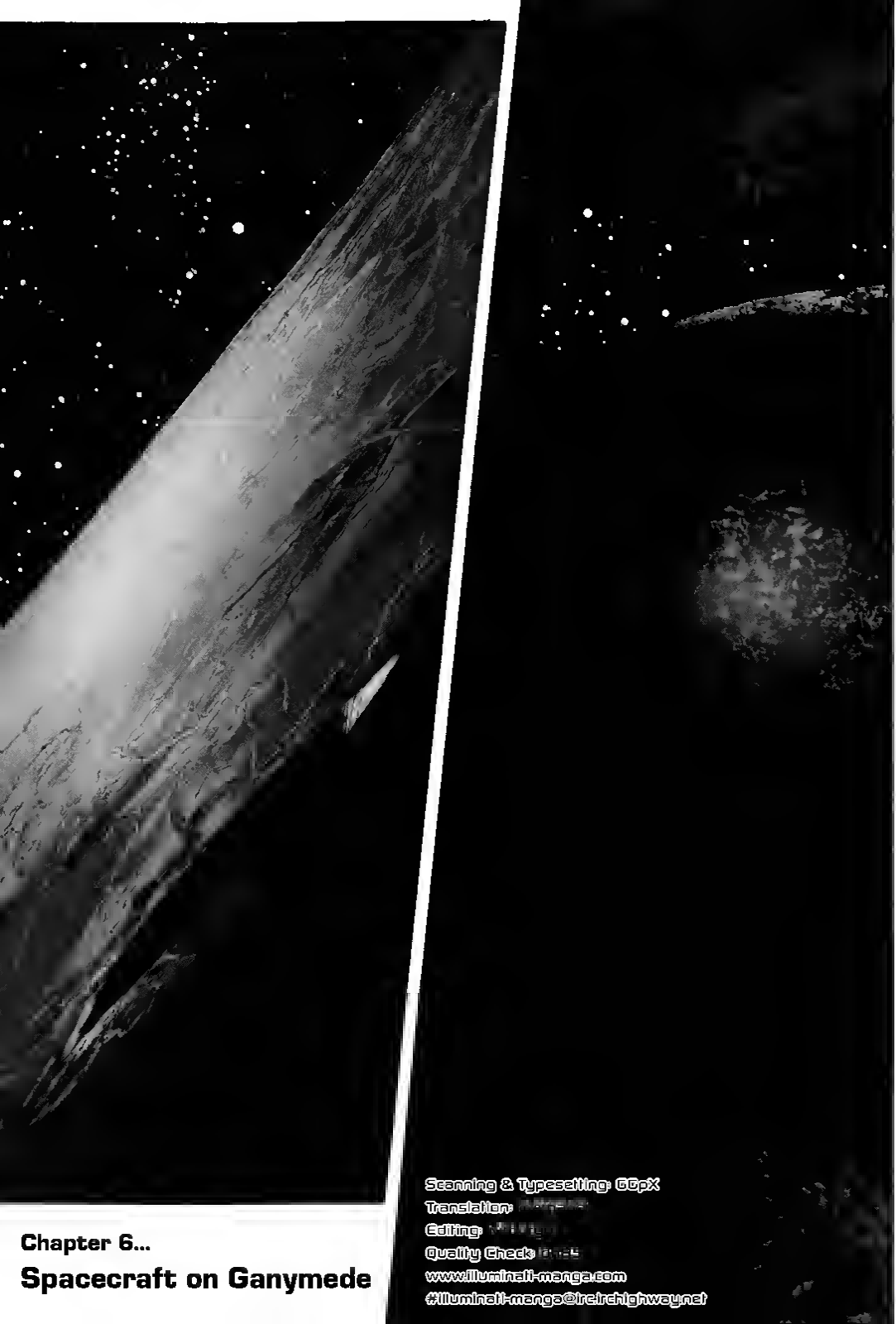
YOU'RE THE SUCCESSOR SHIP TO JUPITER 4, WHICH IS INVESTIGATING THE FIFTH PLANET. SO YOU WERE UNDER CONSTRUCTION NEAR THE MOON——
JUPITER 5!?
LYN GARLAND.
HEY, YOU'RE CHIEF CALDWELL'S SECRETARY, UHM...
21
I'VE BROUGHT A MESSAGE TO YOU FROM THE CHIEF.


JUPI-
TER!?
I'VE ASKED THE TWO OF YOU TO INVESTIGATE CHARLIE, WHO WAS DISCOVERED ON THE MOON.
IN FACT, AT THE SAME TIME, WE KEPT ONE MORE IMPORTANT DISCOVERY UNDER ABSOLUTE SECRECY.
JOINING JUPITER 5— THIS WILL ENTAIL JOURNEYING STRAIGHT ON TO JUPITER—!!
DR. HUNT. PROFESSOR DANCHEKKER. I KNOW YOU MUST BE SURPRISED BUT I'VE TAKEN THESE STEPS OUT OF CAUTION.
I NEED YOU TWO TO LISTEN TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY. AND THEN DECIDE WHETHER TO RETURN TO EARTH OR JOIN JUPITER 5 A.K.A. THE J5 MISSION.

JUPITER'S THIRD MOON, GANYMEDE—

24

THERE. WE MADE A DISCOVERY SO LARGE AS TO COMPLETELY DWARF CHARLIE!

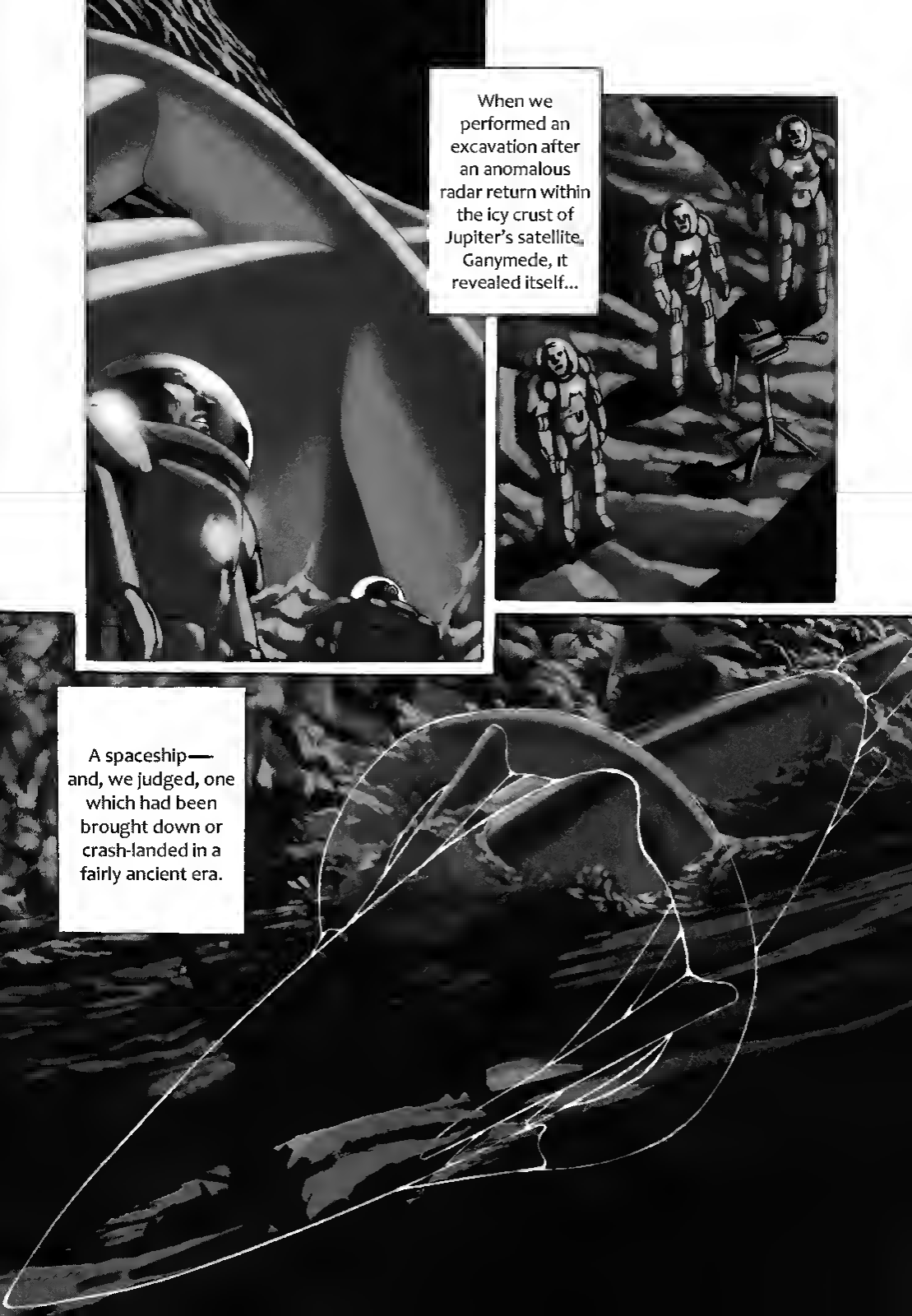


Scanning & Typesetting: GOpX
Translation:
Editing:
Quality Check:
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@irc.irchighway.net

Chapter 6...
Spacecraft on Ganymede

Chapter 6 ...

Spacecraft on Ganymede

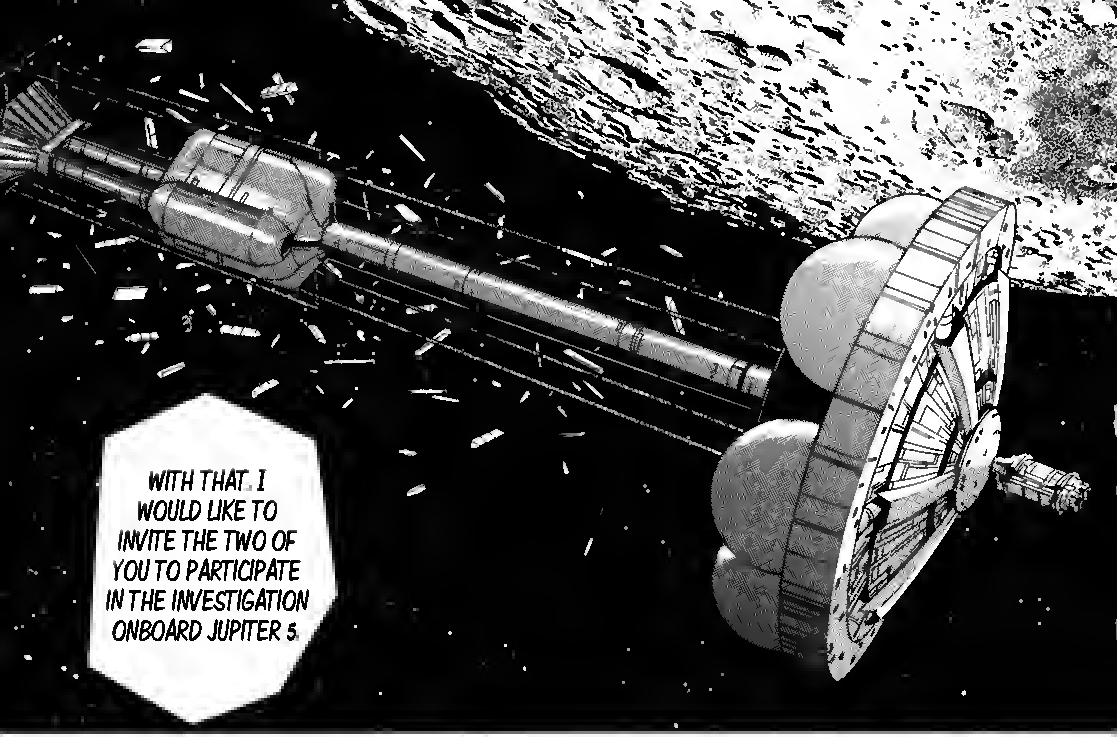

When we performed an excavation after an anomalous radar return within the icy crust of Jupiter's satellite, Ganymede, it revealed itself...
A spaceship— and, we judged, one which had been brought down or crash-landed in a fairly ancient era.

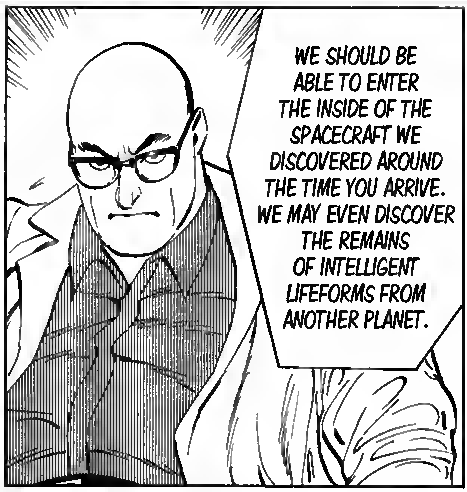
CONTACT THE SPACE ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS—
WE HAVE TO BUILD A BASE HERE! THE WHOLE CREW OF JUPITER 4 WILL GET ON IT... BUT THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH!
SEND JUPITER 5 IMMEDIATELY FOR A LARGE-SCALE INVESTIGATION! WE HAVE TO GET THEM TO DISPATCH NEW PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT!

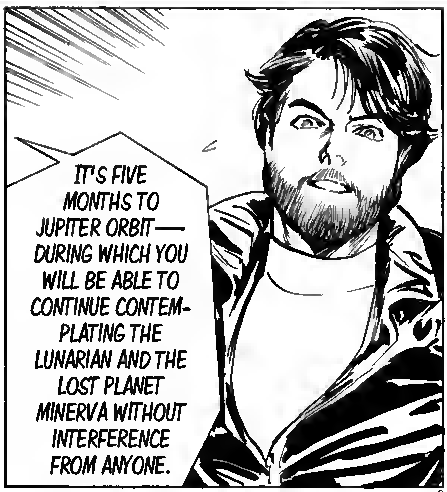
IT HAPPENED JUST AS CHARLIE WAS DISCOVERED ON THE SURFACE OF THE MOON. I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT AN UPROAR THE SPACE ARMY WAS IN.
JUST WHEN, AND BY WHO, COULD SUCH A CRAFT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO GANYMEDE——? WAS THIS RELATED TO CHARLIE, OR NOT...?
BUT, WHAT BOTHERED US WERE THE ACTIONS OF THE PEACE COMMITTEE...
AND SO WE DECIDED TO HURRY THE COMPLETION OF THE NEW SCIENCE VESSEL JUPITER 5, AND SEND IT ALONG TO GANYMEDE.

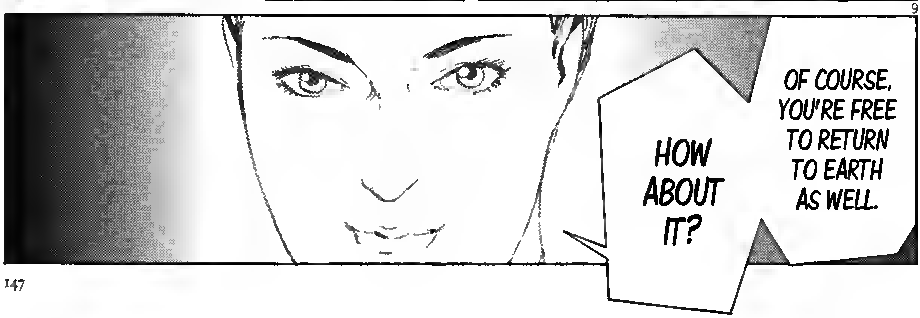
GOSSIP ABOUT AN INFORMATION DEALER WITHIN THE SPACE ARMY WAS CEASELESS, BUT—
...BECAUSE ALTHOUGH WE WERE CAREFULLY MANAGING OUR INFORMATION, CHAIRMAN SORENSEN QUICKLY CAME UP TO THE MOON, AS THOUGH HE HAD DETECTED SOMETHING.
IF BY CHANCE... WHEN CHARLIE WAS INCINERATED IN THAT SUSPICIOUS FIRE, IF BY SOME CHANCE THAT WAS RELATED—
7
WE HAVE TO EXERCISE GREAT CARE IN OUR COMMUNICATIONS, AND THAT'S WHY I'M DELIVERING THIS MESSAGE IN THIS FASHION.
THERE IS NO PROOF AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES REMAIN UNDETERMINED AS YET, BUT WE HAVE COME TO REGARD THE PEACE COMMITTEE AS A POTENTIAL ENEMY, WITH CAUTION.

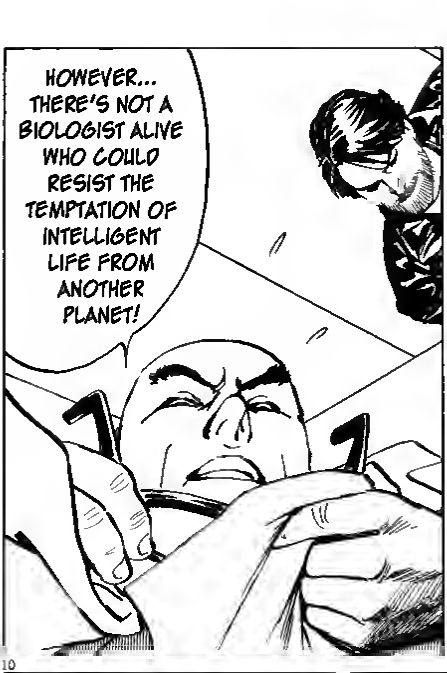
WHILE THEY HAVE ALWAYS SHOWN STRONG INTEREST IN THE MOON, IT SEEMS THEIR REACTION TO INVESTIGATIONS IN OTHER PLACES IS COOL.
FORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO SIGN THAT THE PEACE COMMITTEE HAS NOTICED OUR DISCOVERY ON GANYMEDE.
THANKS TO YOU GENTLEMEN. THE LUNARIAN HYPOTHESIS MOVED FORWARD, AND THEIR ATTENTION WAS DRAWN AWAY. FROM HERE ON OUT, WE'LL GET BUSY INVESTIGATING THE SPACECRAFT ON GANYMEDE COVERTLY.


WITH THAT, I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE THE TWO OF YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INVESTIGATION ONBOARD JUPITER 5.


WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO ENTER THE INSIDE OF THE SPACECRAFT WE DISCOVERED AROUND THE TIME YOU ARRIVE. WE MAY EVEN DISCOVER THE REMAINS OF INTELLIGENT LIFEFORMS FROM ANOTHER PLANET.


IT'S FIVE MONTHS TO JUPITER ORBIT— DURING WHICH YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE CONTEM-PLATING THE LUNARIAN AND THE LOST PLANET MINERVA WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM ANYONE.


OF COURSE, YOU'RE FREE TO RETURN TO EARTH AS WELL.
HOW ABOUT IT?


HOWEVER... THERE'S NOT A BIOLOGIST ALIVE WHO COULD RESIST THE TEMPTATION OF INTELLIGENT LIFE FROM ANOTHER PLANET!

I HAVE RESEARCH LEFT TO DO ON EARTH...

10

SINCE YOU MENTION IT— BY A ROUGH AGE ESTIMATE, I'VE HEARD WORD IT'S A MILLION YEARS OLD.

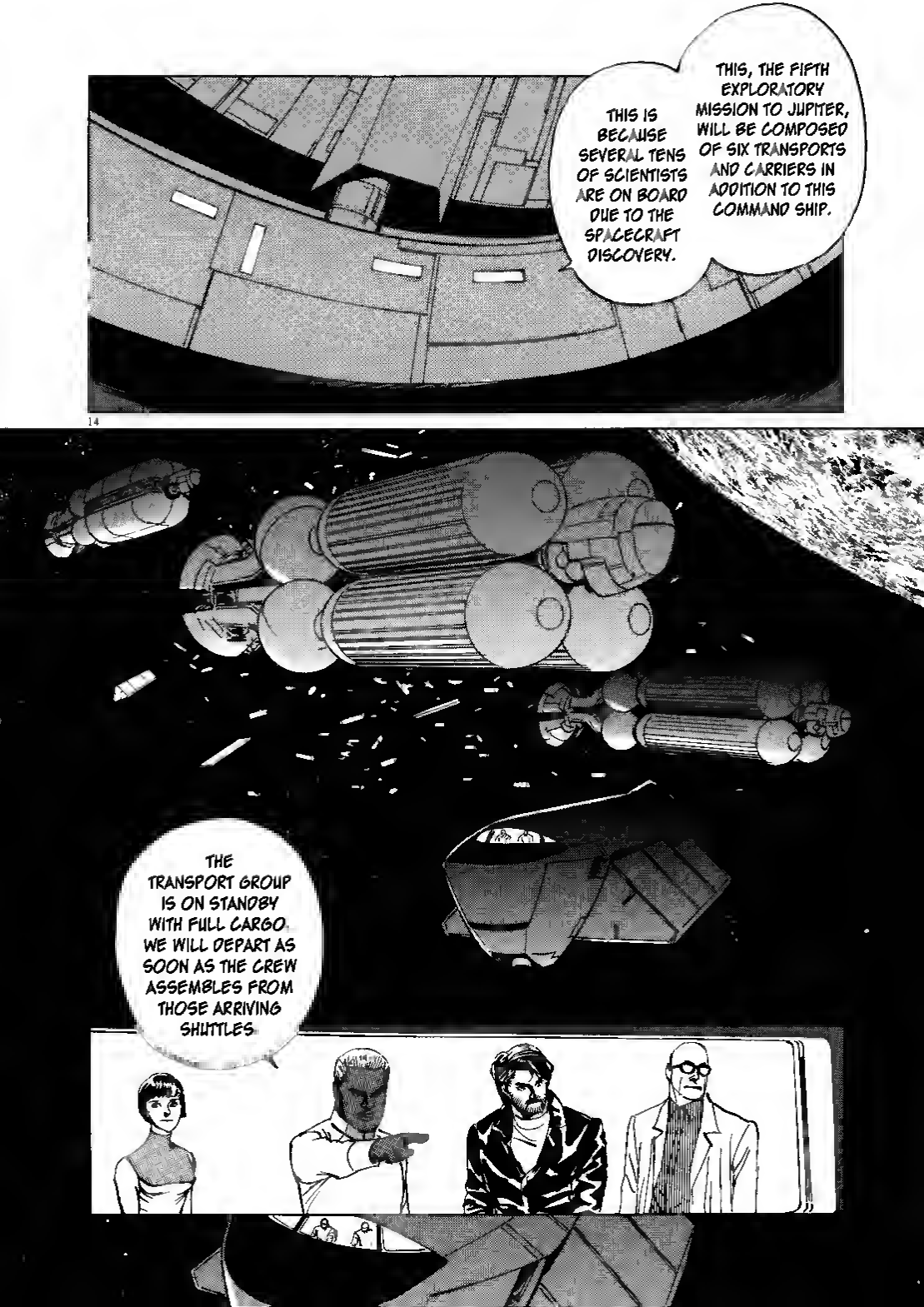
YES, AS DID I.
I FEEL YOU... OR I GUESS I SHOULD SAY, SHE PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW HOW BOTH OF US WOULD ANSWER.

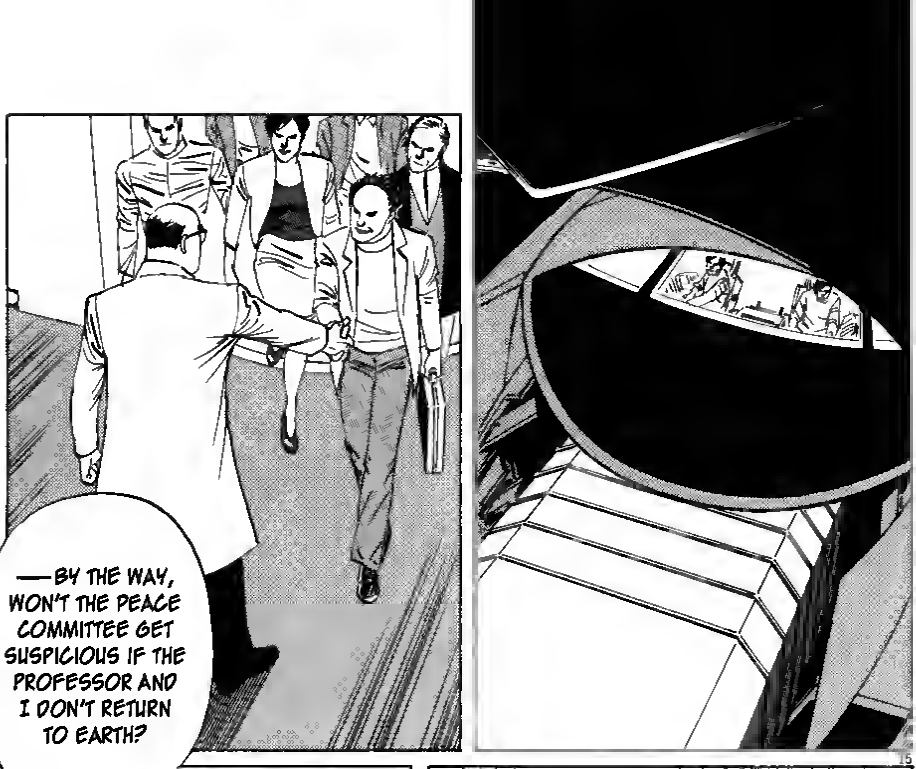
A SPACECRAFT ON GANYMEDE... THINGS MIGHT JUST MAKE SENSE IF IT BELONGED TO LUNARIANS LIKE CHARLIE, BUT...
WELL I'LL BE—

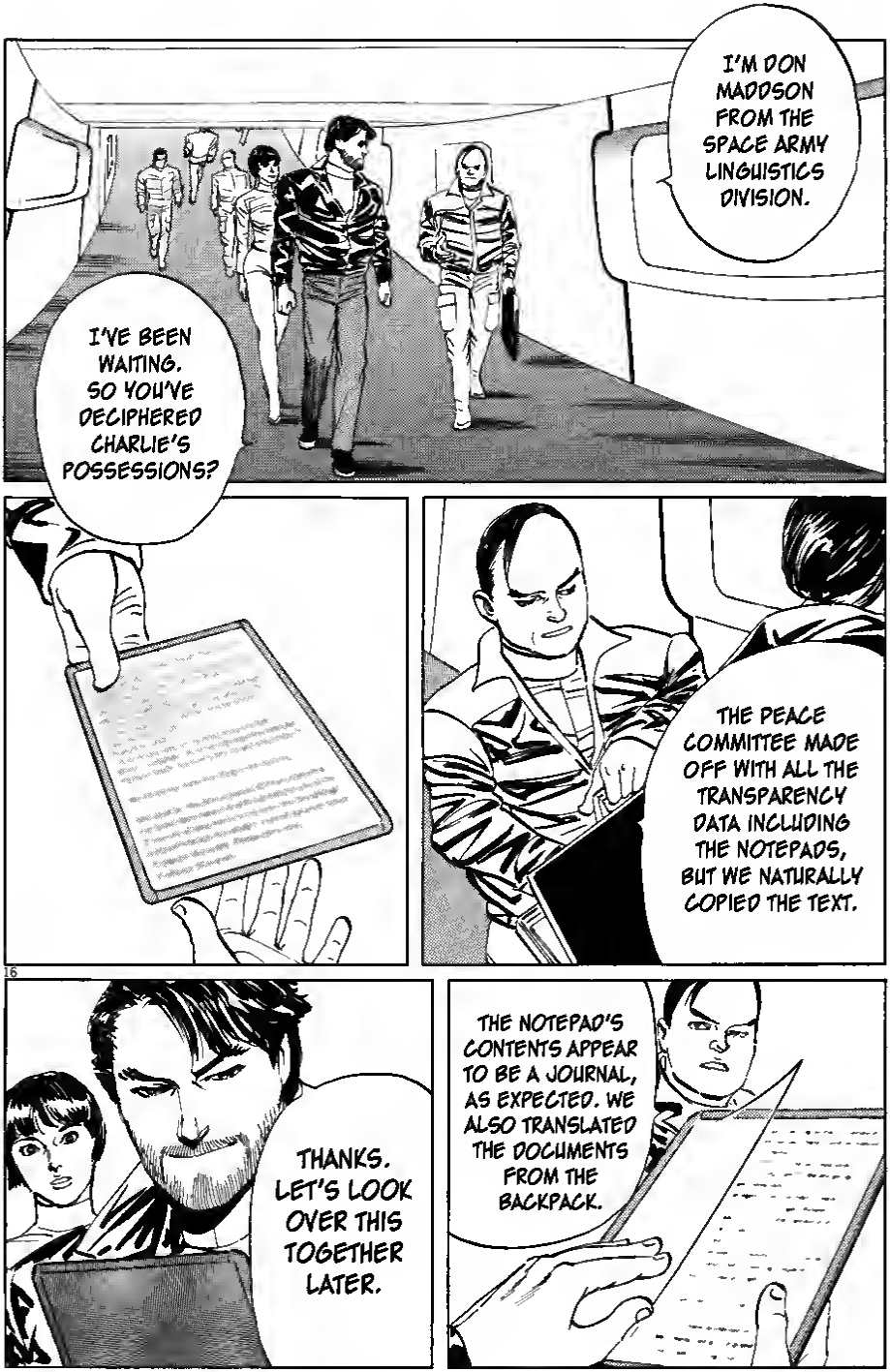
A MILLION YEARS!?
WE DON'T YET KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE UNRELATED OR NOT.
DID YOU FORGET, DR. HUNT!?
IT SEEMS WE HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT COMPLETELY UNRELATED ALIENS VISITED THE ANCIENT SOLAR SYSTEM...
THAT'S AN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE DIFFERENCE FROM THE LUNARIANS' CIVILIZATION...

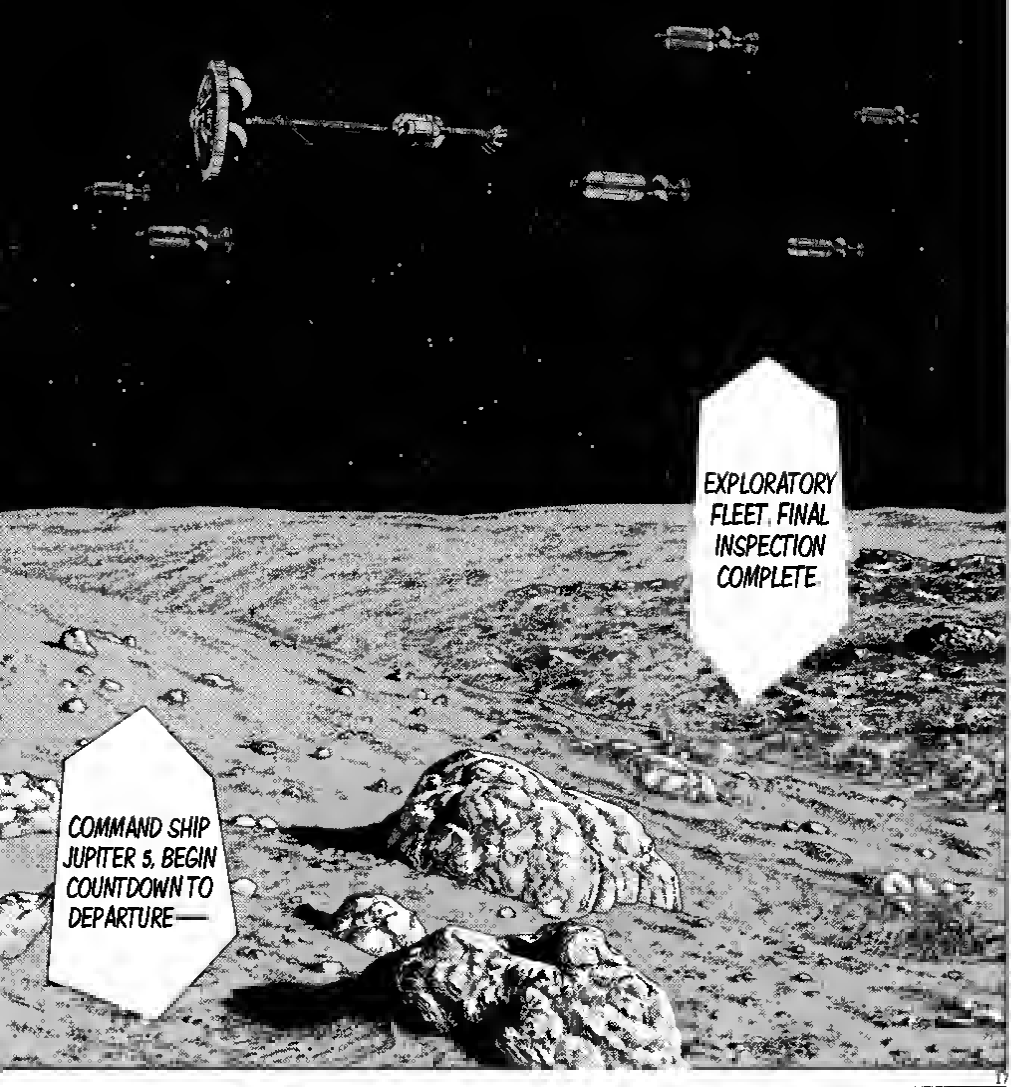
THAT WAS A JOKE.
THE CHIEF WAS MIGHTY SURPRISED THAT YOU COULD SAY SUCH A THING WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE GANYMEDE SPACECRAFT.
YOU SAID THAT ALIENS MIGHT HAVE TAKEN CHARLIE AWAY FROM EARTH!
We may need a point of view like his to solve the mysteries of the Moon and Ganymede.
For a second there, it felt like he saw right through everything.
12
GIVE ME A BREAK. IF ALL YOU NEED IS SOMEONE TO SAY ALIENS DID IT, GET A UFO BELIEVER.
THE CHIEF'S INTUITION IS PRETTY ACCURATE. SHE'S BEEN MANAGING PEOPLE WITH THAT INTUITION AND SHE'S NEVER BEEN WRONG.

DR. VICTOR HUNT, PROFESSOR CHRISTIAN DANCHEKKER, LYN GARLAND. PERMISSION TO BOARD JUPITER 5 GRANTED.
I'M COMMANDER SHANNON.
ARE YOU COMING ABOARD TOO, LYN?
UNDER ORDERS, I AM TO ACCOMPANY YOU TO GANYMEDE!

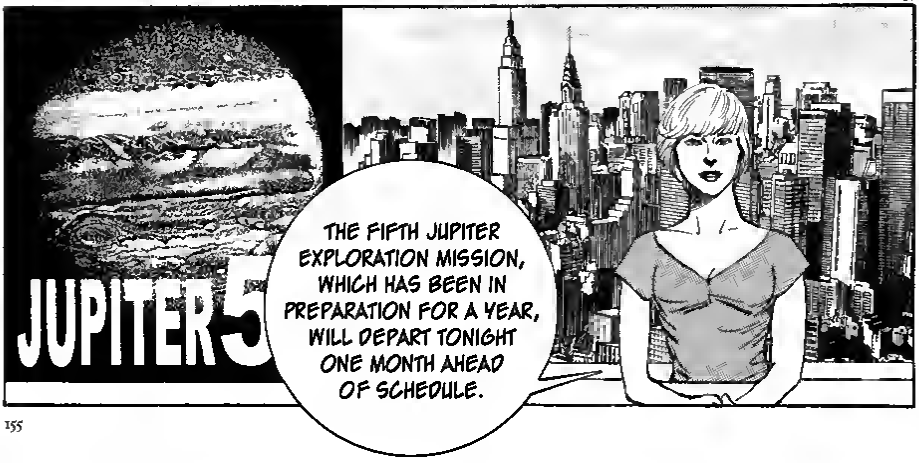

THIS, THE FIFTH EXPLORATORY MISSION TO JUPITER, WILL BE COMPOSED OF SIX TRANSPORTS AND CARRIERS IN ADDITION TO THIS COMMAND SHIP.
THIS IS BECAUSE SEVERAL TENS OF SCIENTISTS ARE ON BOARD DUE TO THE SPACECRAFT DISCOVERY.
THE TRANSPORT GROUP IS ON STANDBY WITH FULL CARGO. WE WILL DEPART AS SOON AS THE CREW ASSEMBLES FROM THOSE ARRIVING SHUTTLES.


—BY THE WAY, WON'T THE PEACE COMMITTEE GET SUSPICIOUS IF THE PROFESSOR AND I DON'T RETURN TO EARTH?
WE'RE AN ARMY WITHOUT ARMS, BUT AS A MILITARY OPERATION, TACTICS AND COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE ARE OUR SPECIALTY.
FEAR NOT— REPLACEMENTS FOR THE TWO OF YOU HAVE RETURNED TO EARTH, AND THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO PULL THE WOOL OVER THEIR EYES.
WELL DONE...

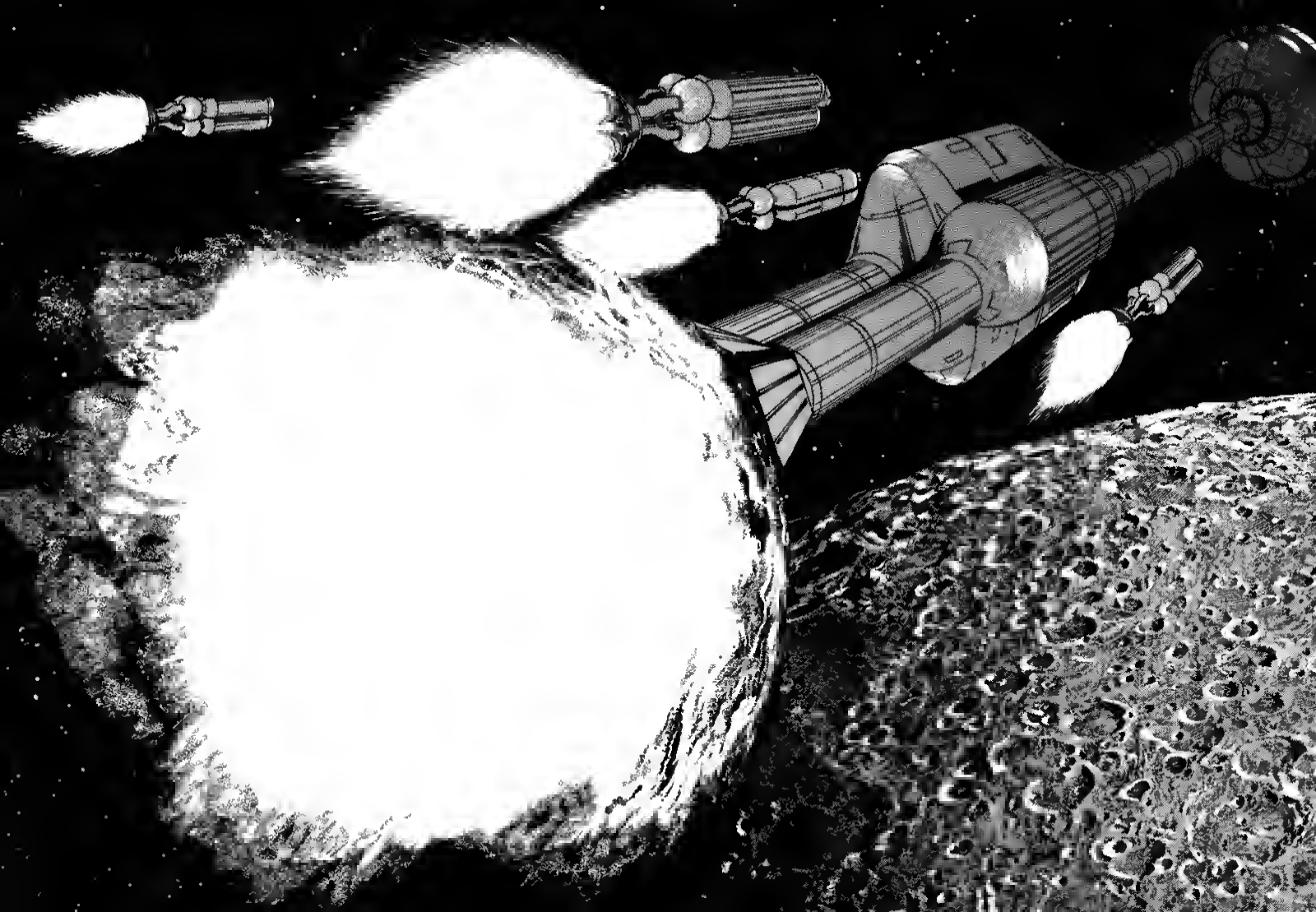

I'M DON MADDSON FROM THE SPACE ARMY LINGUISTICS DIVISION.
I'VE BEEN WAITING. SO YOU'VE DECIPHERED CHARLIE'S POSSESSIONS?
THE PEACE COMMITTEE MADE OFF WITH ALL THE TRANSPARENCY DATA INCLUDING THE NOTEPADS, BUT WE NATURALLY COPIED THE TEXT.
16
THANKS. LET'S LOOK OVER THIS TOGETHER LATER.
THE NOTEPAD'S CONTENTS APPEAR TO BE A JOURNAL, AS EXPECTED. WE ALSO TRANSLATED THE DOCUMENTS FROM THE BACKPACK.


EXPLORATORY FLEET, FINAL INSPECTION COMPLETE
COMMAND SHIP JUPITER 5, BEGIN COUNTDOWN TO DEPARTURE—

17


JUPITER 5
THE FIFTH JUPITER EXPLORATION MISSION, WHICH HAS BEEN IN PREPARATION FOR A YEAR, WILL DEPART TONIGHT ONE MONTH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

ACCORDING TO COMMANDER SHANNON, IT SEEMS THE SCHEDULE HAS ACCELERATED DUE TO TECHNOLOGICAL REASONS...
THIS TIME, THEY PLAN TO BUILD A BASE AND CONDUCT A FOCUSED INVESTIGATION OF GANYMEDE.
THE LIGHT FROM THE FLEET'S THERMONUCLEAR ENGINES, INCLUDING JUPITER 5, SHOULD BE VISIBLE FROM THE EARTH AS THEY DEPART ORBIT AROUND THE MOON.



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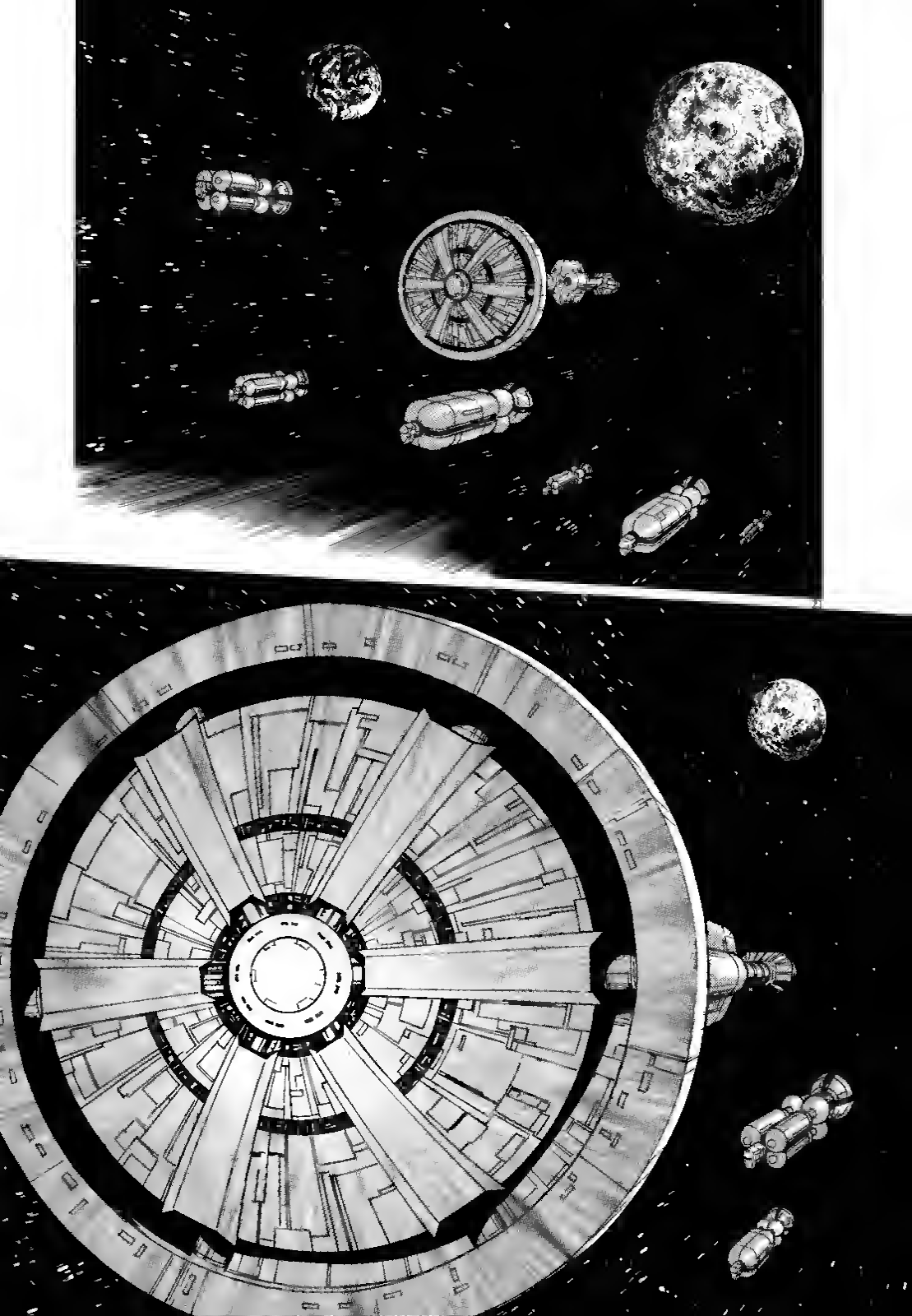
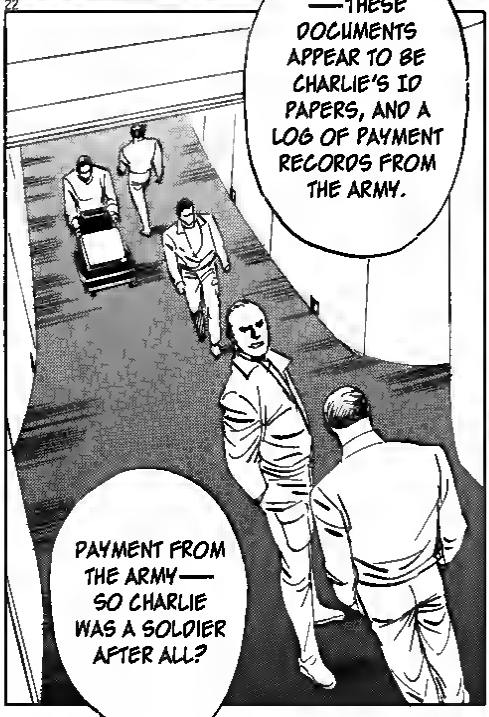
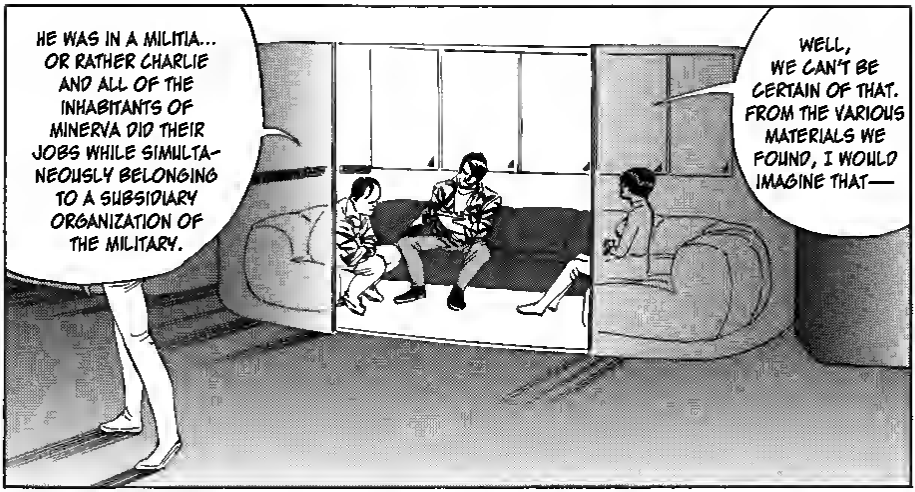
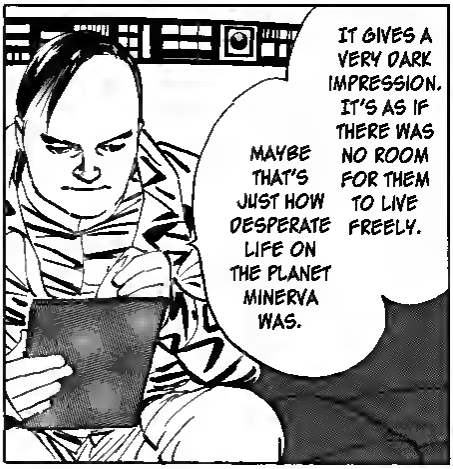



——THESE DOCUMENTS APPEAR TO BE CHARLIE'S ID PAPERS, AND A LOG OF PAYMENT RECORDS FROM THE ARMY.
PAYMENT FROM THE ARMY—— SO CHARLIE WAS A SOLDIER AFTER ALL?


HE WAS IN A MILITIA... OR RATHER CHARLIE AND ALL OF THE INHABITANTS OF MINERVA DID THEIR JOBS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY BELONGING TO A SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITARY.
WELL, WE CAN'T BE CERTAIN OF THAT. FROM THE VARIOUS MATERIALS WE FOUND, I WOULD IMAGINE THAT—

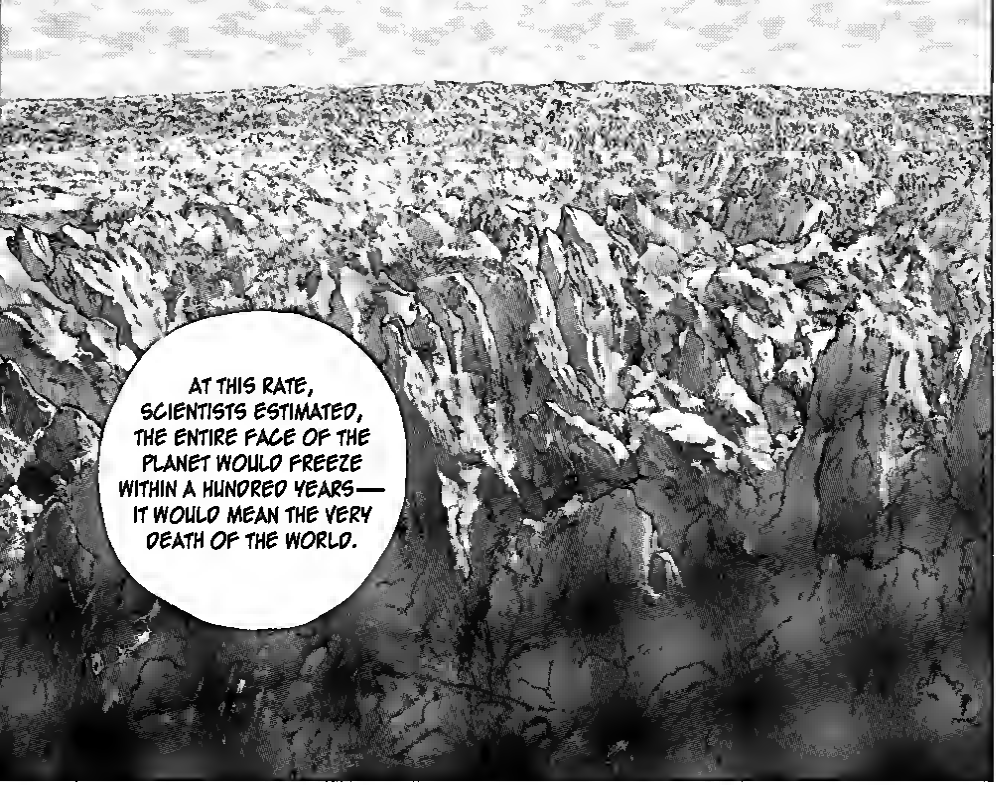

IT GIVES A VERY DARK IMPRESSION. IT'S AS IF THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM TO LIVE FREELY.
MAYBE THAT'S JUST HOW DESPERATE LIFE ON THE PLANET MINERVA WAS.

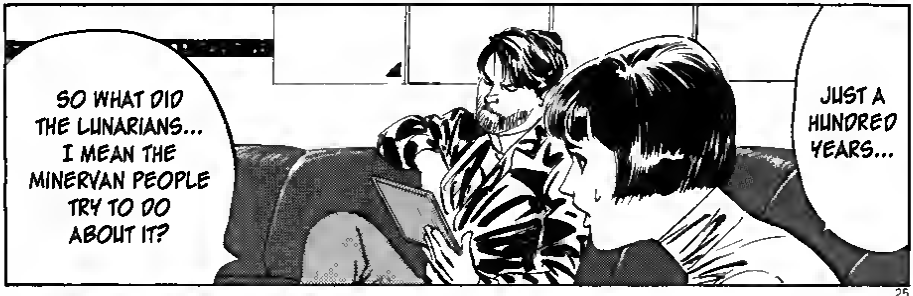
IT'S LIKE TOTAL MILITARISM...

23

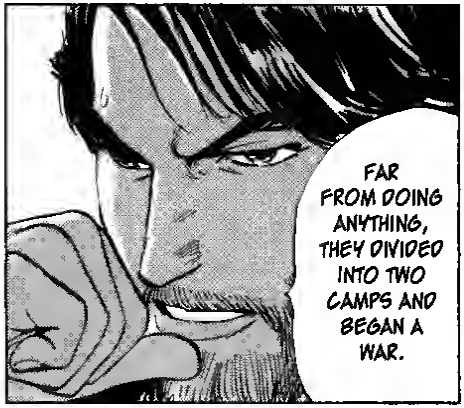
THEY KNEW— THEY WERE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION.

FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS AGO— ALTHOUGH THE EARTH WAS IN THE MIDST OF A LONG ICE AGE, IT LOOKS LIKE THE PLANET MINERVA WAS UNDERGOING A MORE SEVERE GLACIATION.
GLOBAL COOLING CONTINUED UNABATED, IN PART DUE TO IT BEING MUCH FARTHER AWAY FROM THE SUN THAN EARTH, AND A SNOWY DESERT EXPANDED UNCHECKED FROM BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH POLES.


AT THIS RATE, SCIENTISTS ESTIMATED, THE ENTIRE FACE OF THE PLANET WOULD FREEZE WITHIN A HUNDRED YEARS— IT WOULD MEAN THE VERY DEATH OF THE WORLD.


SO WHAT DID THE LUNARIANS... I MEAN THE MINERVAN PEOPLE TRY TO DO ABOUT IT?
JUST A HUNDRED YEARS...

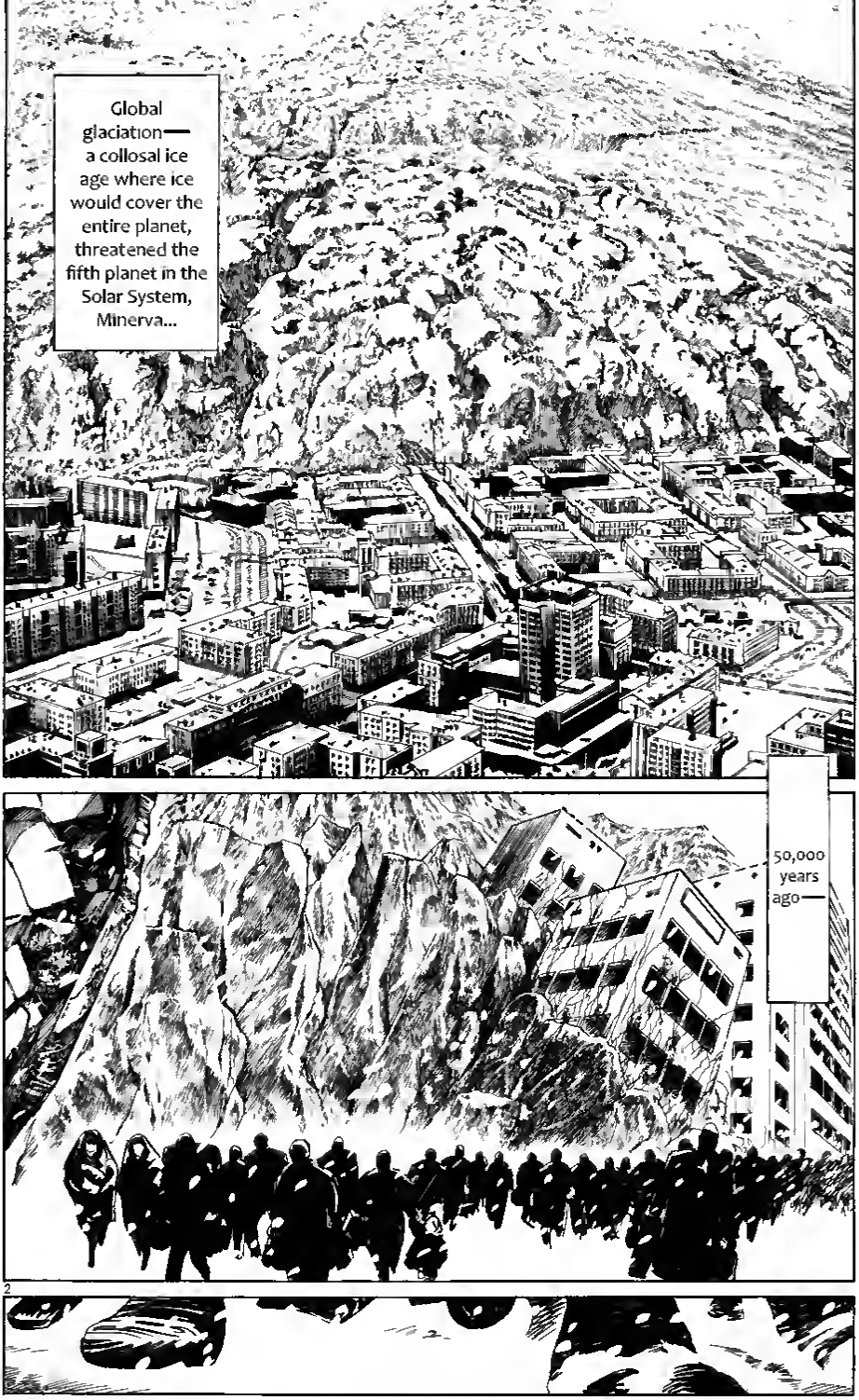
25


FAR FROM DOING ANYTHING, THEY DIVIDED INTO TWO CAMPS AND BEGAN A WAR.

NOTHING—

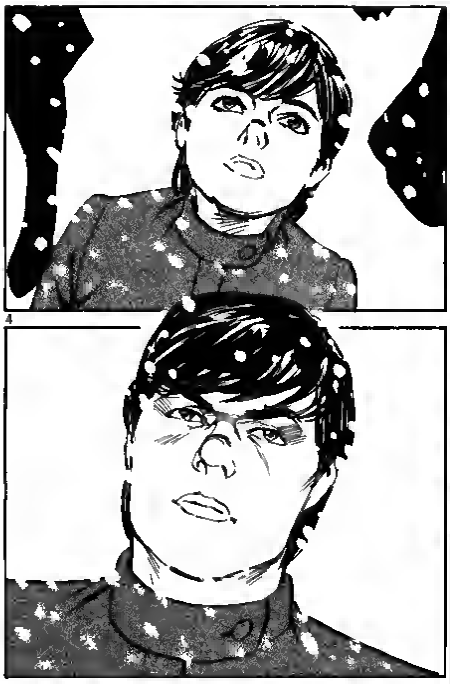
THE SOUTHERN CONTINENT WHERE CHARLIE LIVED, "SELIOS", AND—
THE NORTHERN CONTINENT, "RANVIA", WHICH OPPOSED THEM.
BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM, A FINAL BATTLE WOULD BEGIN. IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD...!!

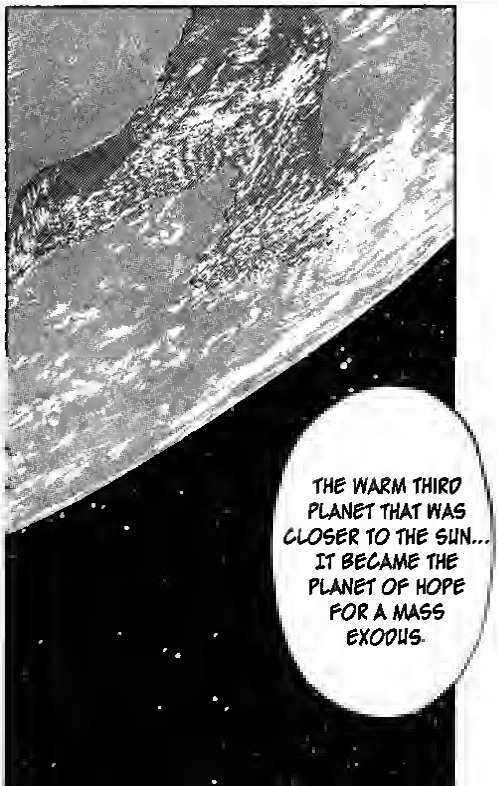
Chapter 7...
War at Minerva
Scanning & Typesetting: GGpX
Translation: Elkin
Editing:
Quality Check:
www.illuminati-manga.com
#illuminati-manga@irc.irchighway.net


Global glaciation— a collosal ice age where ice would cover the entire planet, threatened the fifth planet in the Solar System, Minerva...
50,000 years ago—

TO ESCAPE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD, IT WAS SAID THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO AVOID HUMANITY'S EXTINCTION...
3

A PARA-DISE AWAITS EVERY-ONE—
IT IS A WARM PLACE, WITH PLENTI-FUL AIR, WATER AND FOOD
EVERY-ONE, LET'S MOVE TO THE THIRD PLANET!



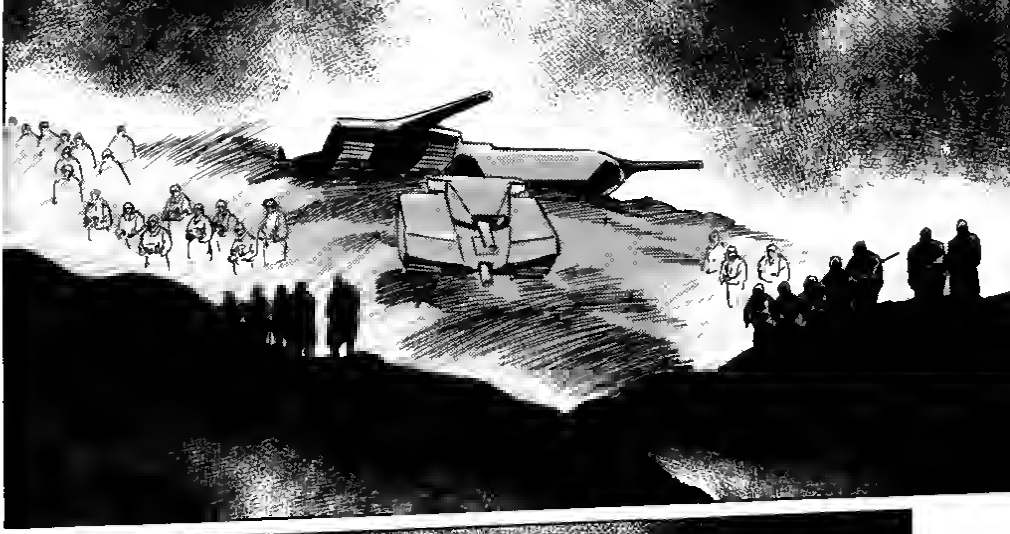

THE WARM THIRD PLANET THAT WAS CLOSER TO THE SUN... IT BECAME THE PLANET OF HOPE FOR A MASS EXODUS.

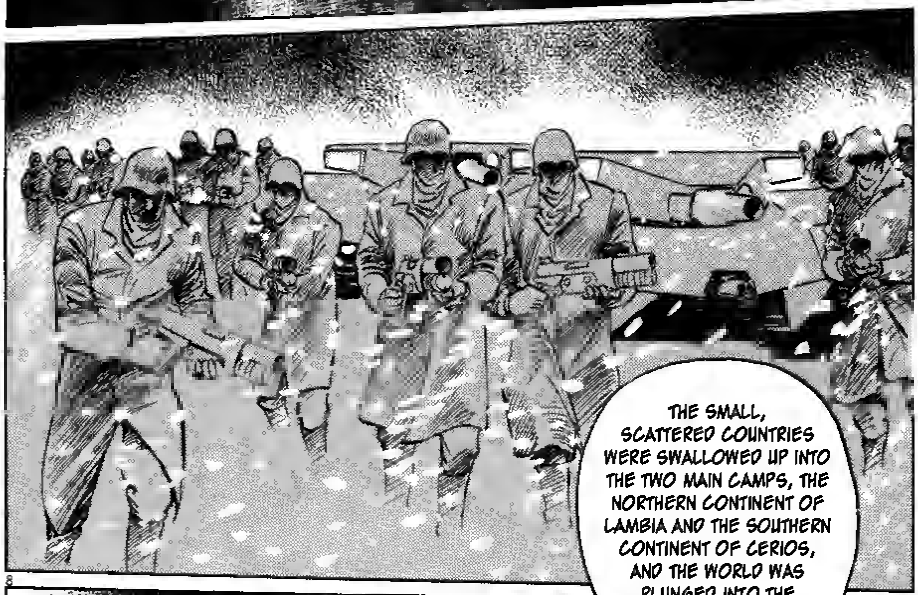
ALL EDUCATION, ADVERTISEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE FILLED WITH THE SAME MESSAGE.
EVERYTHING DEVOTED TO THE EXODUS PLAN... FROM LABOR TO PRODUCTION TO INDUSTRY, EVERYTHING WAS MONOPOLIZED AND RATIONING WAS IMPLEMENTED FOR LIMITED RESOURCES.

HOWEVER, A DARK SECRET LURKED BENEATH IT ALL...

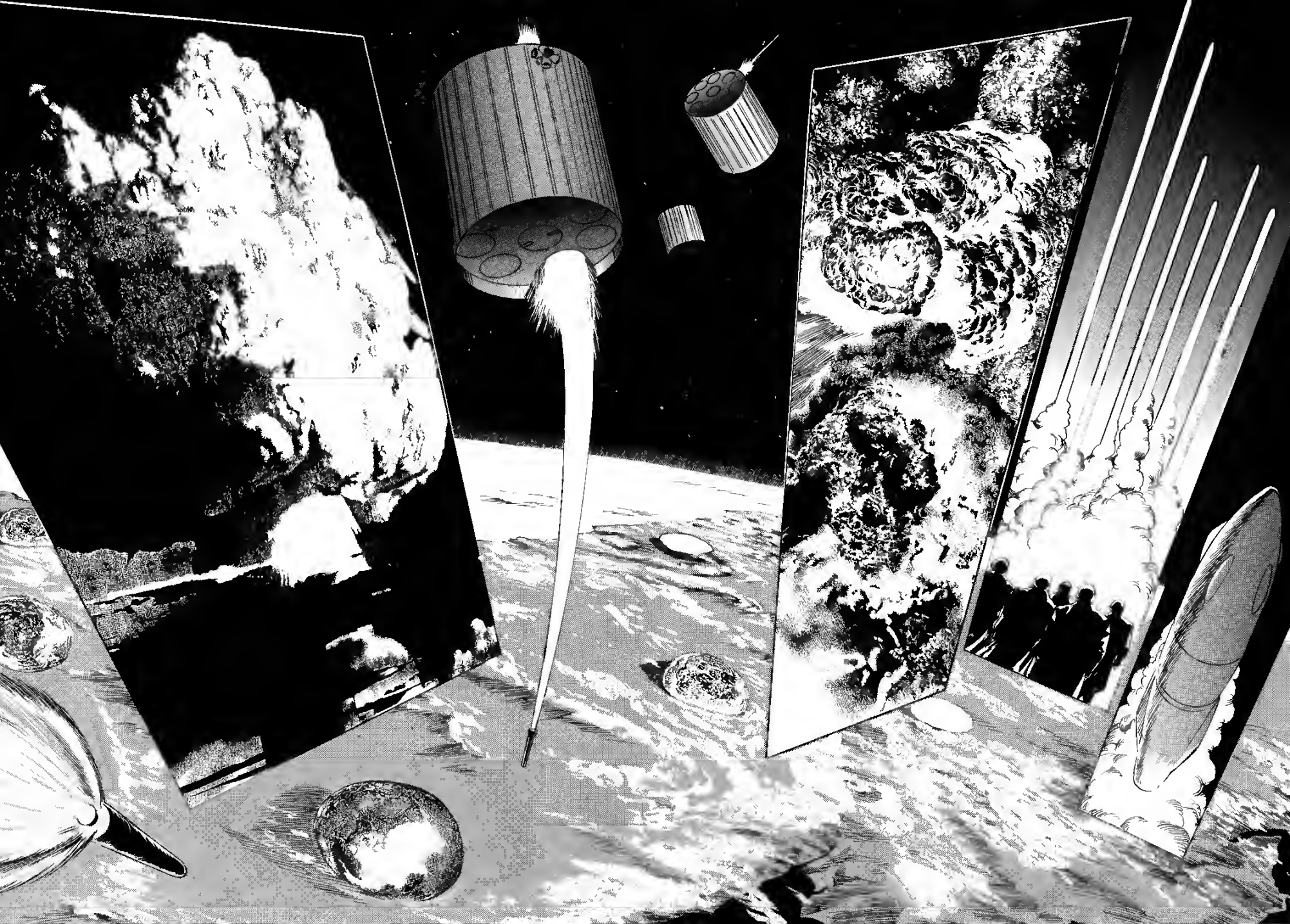
THE PLANET MINERVA HAD EXCEEDINGLY FEW METALLIC ORES.
WE CAN'T BUILD THE SPACE SHIPS NEEDED FOR THE EXODUS WITH JUST THIS.
I TOLD YA. THE SLOGANS ARE ALL LIES, JUST FAIRY TALES FOR THE KIDS.
THE COUNTRIES ARE HIDING THIS FROM US ALL 'CAUSE THEY'RE SCARED PEOPLE'D START RIOTING IF THEY FOUND OUT THE TRUTH.

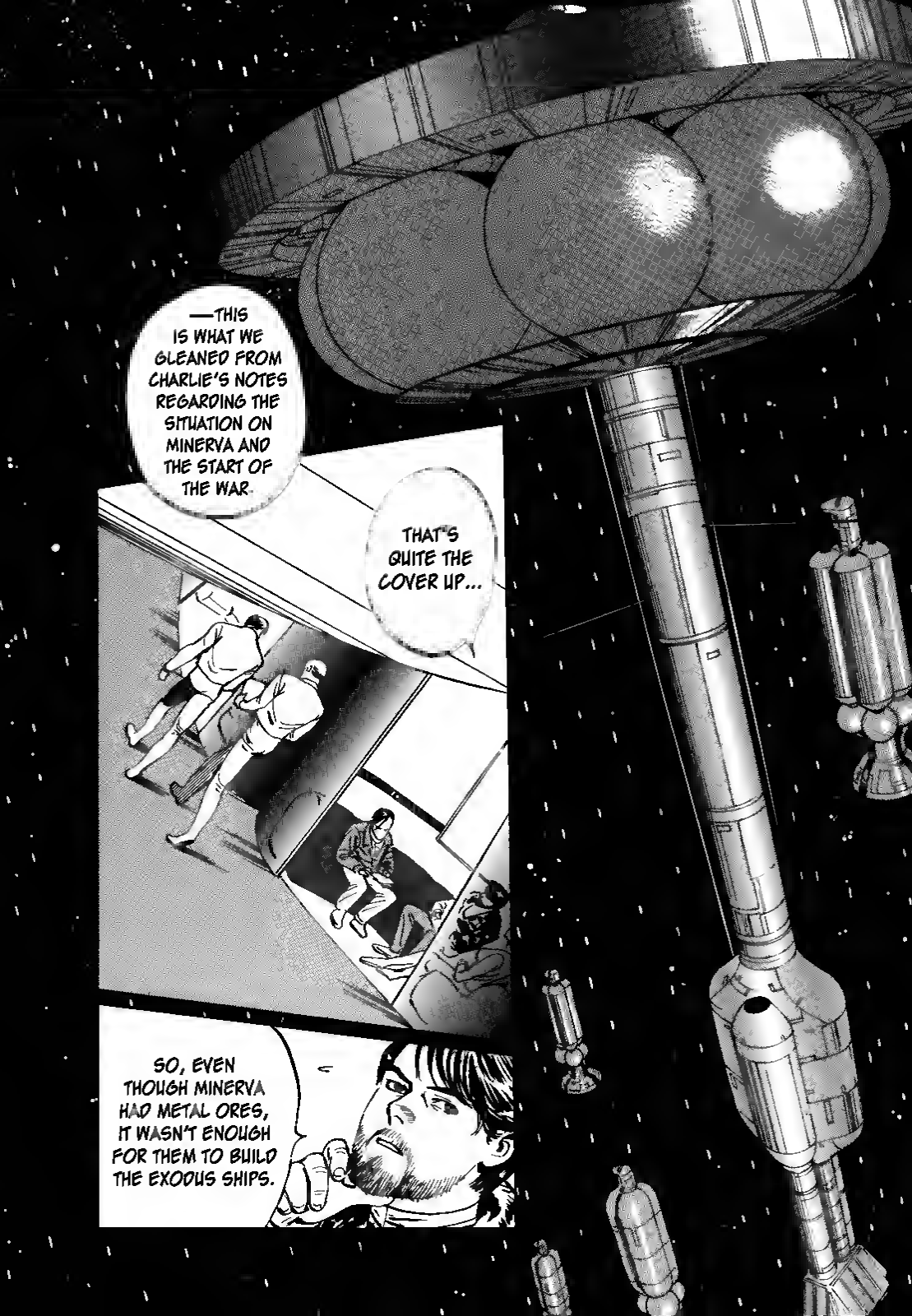
SO THAT EACH SIDE COULD SECURE JUST EVEN A LITTLE MORE OF THE SCARCE METALS, THINGS QUICKLY ESCALATED INTO A FULL OUT TERRITORIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN COUNTRIES TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE MINES.

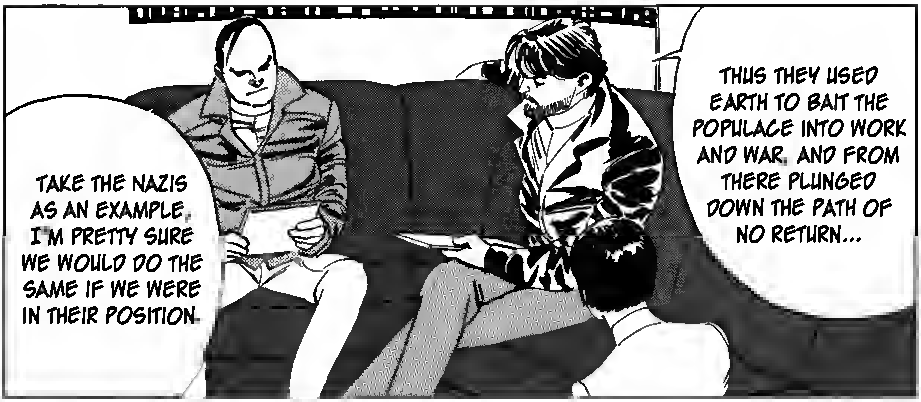



THE SMALL, SCATTERED COUNTRIES WERE SWALLOWED UP INTO THE TWO MAIN CAMPS, THE NORTHERN CONTINENT OF LAMBIA AND THE SOUTHERN CONTINENT OF CERIOS, AND THE WORLD WAS PLUNGED INTO THE FINAL WAR.

THE WINNER WOULD TAKE ALL THE METALS AND CONSTRUCT THE EXODUS SHIPS—
BUT BOTH SIDES HAD ALREADY PLUNGED INTO A VICIOUS CYCLE WHERE THE HEAT OF BATTLE WOULD DRIVE THE PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS, WHICH WOULD IN TURN WORSEN THE CONFLICT...




—THIS IS WHAT WE GLEANED FROM CHARLIE'S NOTES REGARDING THE SITUATION ON MINERVA AND THE START OF THE WAR.
THAT'S QUITE THE COVER UP...
SO, EVEN THOUGH MINERVA HAD METAL ORES, IT WASN'T ENOUGH FOR THEM TO BUILD THE EXODUS SHIPS.


TAKE THE NAZIS AS AN EXAMPLE. I'M PRETTY SURE WE WOULD DO THE SAME IF WE WERE IN THEIR POSITION.
THUS THEY USED EARTH TO BAIT THE POPULACE INTO WORK AND WAR, AND FROM THERE PLUNGED DOWN THE PATH OF NO RETURN...

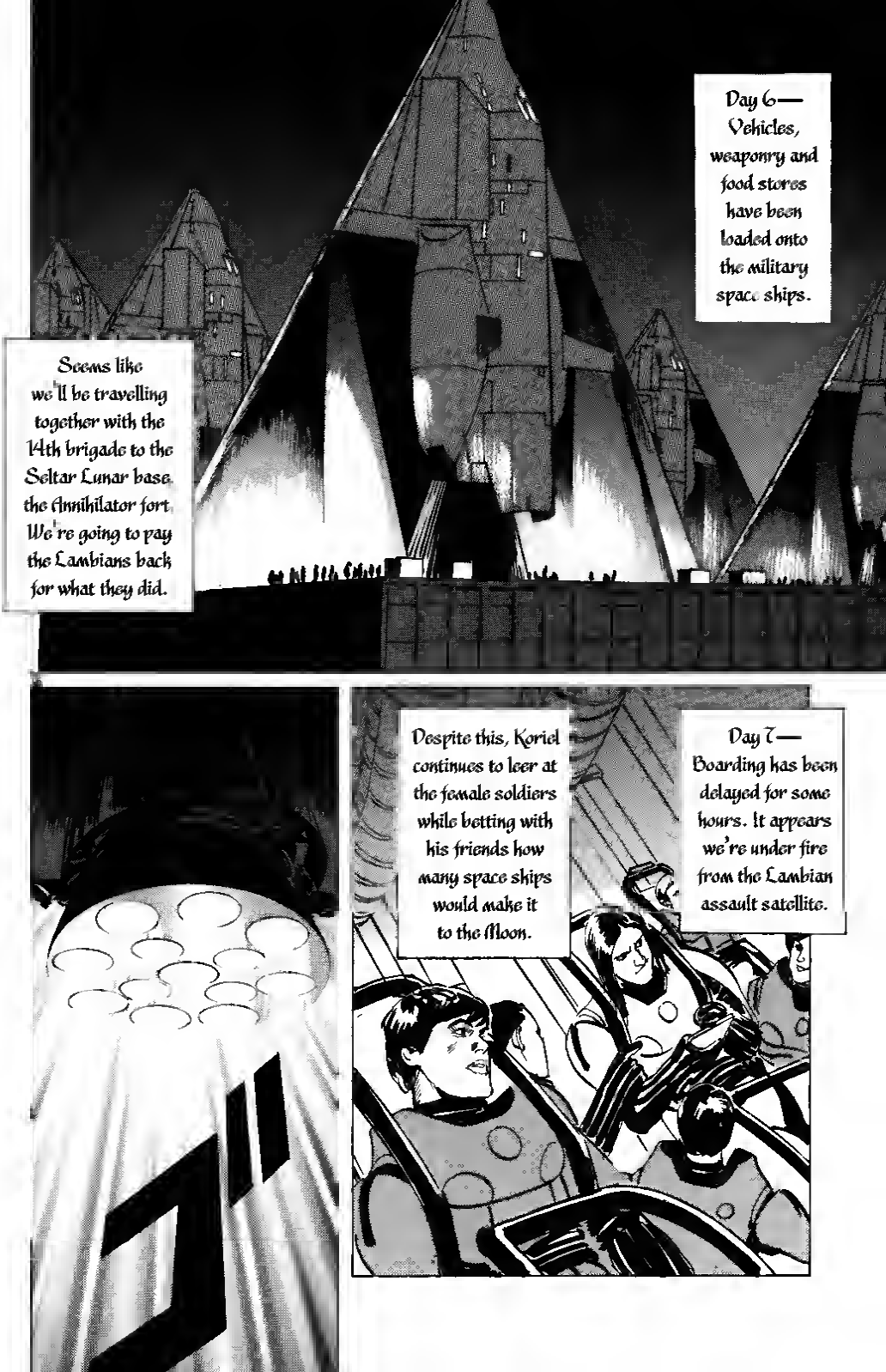
WELL, THE LAMBIANS ARE A HOT BLOODED RACE, SO THEY'D MAKE MISSILES OVER SPACE SHIPS ANY DAY, WHEREAS THE CERIOS FOLKS LIKE CHARLIE WOULD TAKE NOTES.

IF THEY DIDN'T DO SOMETHING STUPID LIKE WAR AND ACTUALLY COOPERATED, IT WOULD HAVE HELPED A LOT MORE PEOPLE...

COME TO THINK OF IT, WHAT'RE THESE ARCH-ENEMIES OF CHARLIE'S LIKE, THE LAMBIANS? ARE THEY SIMPLY A DIFFERENT RACE FROM THE CERIANS, OR ARE THEY BIOLOGICALLY DIFFERENT SOMEHOW...?

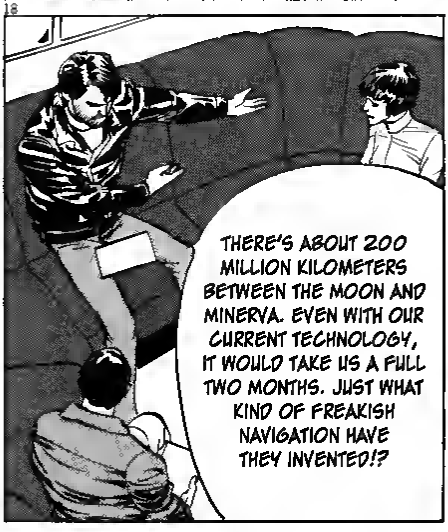
HUH... I WONDER IF THERE'S ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SPACE SHIP FOUND ON GANYMEDE AND THE MINERVANS.
WELL, I GUESS WE CAN'T REALLY LUMP A MILLION YEAR-OLD SPACE SHIP AND THE MINERVA FROM 50,000 YEARS AGO INTO THE SAME DISCUSSION...
I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ANY MENTION ABOUT THAT. I'M GUESSING THEY WERE AT THE VERY LEAST DIFFERENT RACES, BUT AS FOR THE EXACT DETAILS...
WELL THEN, LET'S MOVE ONTO THE PROBLEM OF CHARLIE'S NOTEBOOK— HIS DIARY.
OF COURSE, ALL TERMINOLOGY HAS BEEN ADAPTED INTO OUR LANGUAGE, AND WE'VE ALSO CONVERTED THEIR DATES INTO OUR UNITS OF TIME, BASED ON THE REVOLUTION CYCLE OF MINERVA.
YES, THAT'S QUITE CRITICAL AS WELL.
AS YOU KNOW, THE MINERVAN YEAR IS 1,700 DAYS LONG, WHICH IS AROUND 47 MONTHS.
DATES ARE A PAIN, SO LET'S JUST CALL THE DAY HE STARTED WRITING THIS DIARY "DAY 1" AND WORK ON FROM THERE.

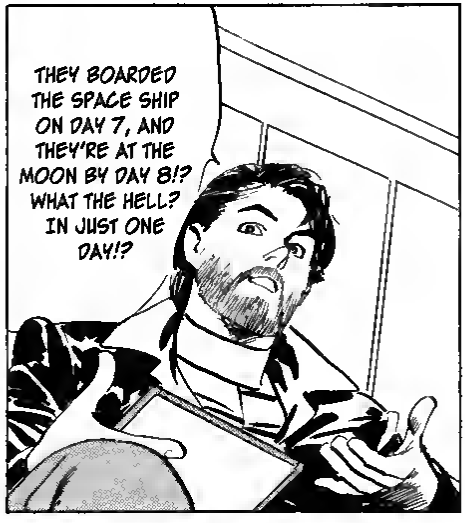
We've received the third mobilization order today. I was shocked to receive my post. I've heard rumours we were going to be part of the ice plains infantry to silence the people in the mines, but to think it was the "Moon"!
Day 1—
15
Day 4—
I learned that the hey cities of Cerios had been wiped out in succession by Lambian missile attacks in the time we were relocating to the space base.
I'm going to be aboard the same space ship as my good friend, Koriel. He seems quite happy.

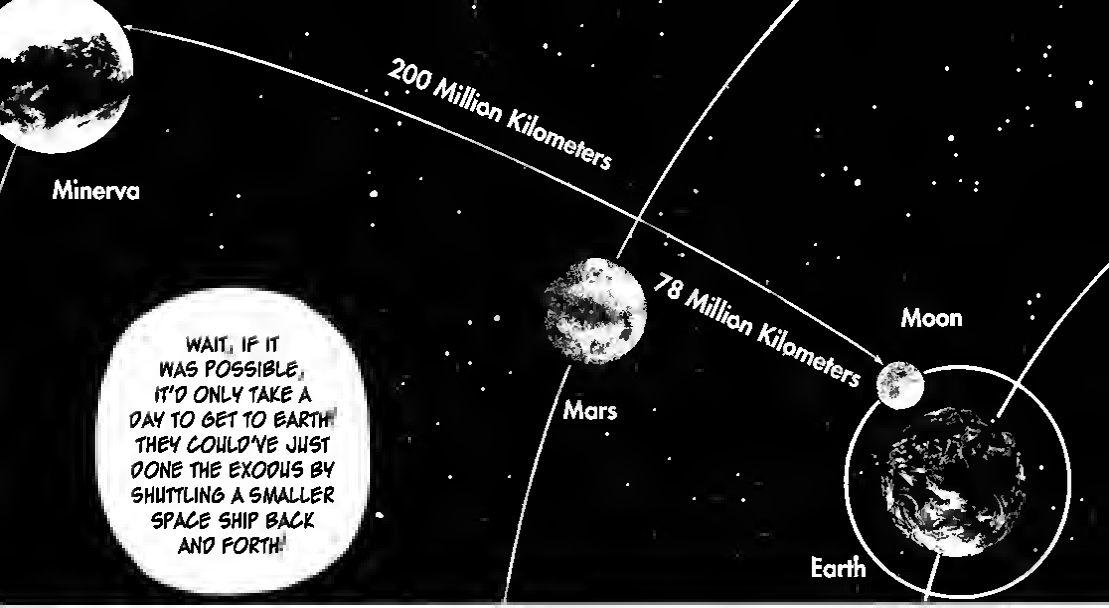

Day 6— Vehicles, weaponry and food stores have been loaded onto the military space ships.
Seems like we'll be travelling together with the 14th brigade to the Seltar Lunar base, the Annihilator fort. We're going to pay the Lambians back for what they did.
Despite this, Koriel continues to leer at the female soldiers while betting with his friends how many space ships would make it to the Moon.
Day 7— Boarding has been delayed for some hours. It appears we're under fire from the Lambian assault satellite.

Day 8—
We have entered lunar orbit.

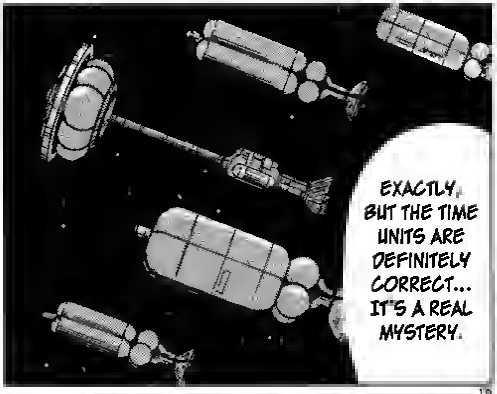
THAT'S IT!


THERE'S ABOUT 200 MILLION KILOMETERS BETWEEN THE MOON AND MINERVA. EVEN WITH OUR CURRENT TECHNOLOGY, IT WOULD TAKE US A FULL TWO MONTHS. JUST WHAT KIND OF FREAKISH NAVIGATION HAVE THEY INVENTED!?

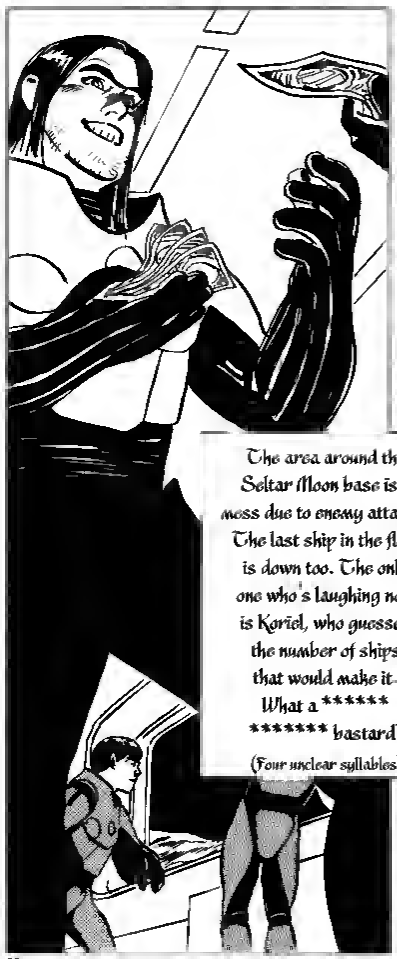

THEY BOARDED THE SPACE SHIP ON DAY 7, AND THEY'RE AT THE MOON BY DAY 8!? WHAT THE HELL? IN JUST ONE DAY!?


Minerva
200 Million Kilometers
78 Million Kilometers
Moon
Mars
Earth
WAIT, IF IT WAS POSSIBLE, IT'D ONLY TAKE A DAY TO GET TO EARTH! THEY COULD'VE JUST DONE THE EXODUS BY SHUTTLING A SMALLER SPACE SHIP BACK AND FORTH!

HM... WELL, PRETTY MUCH THIS ENTIRE THING'S A MYSTERY IN ITSELF...

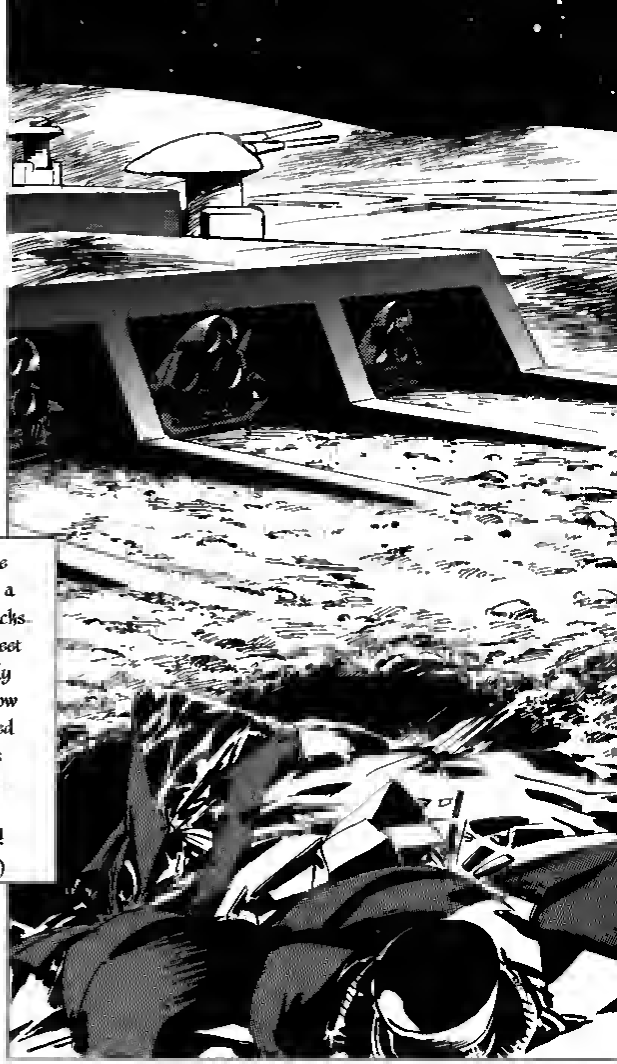

EXACTLY, BUT THE TIME UNITS ARE DEFINITELY CORRECT... IT'S A REAL MYSTERY.

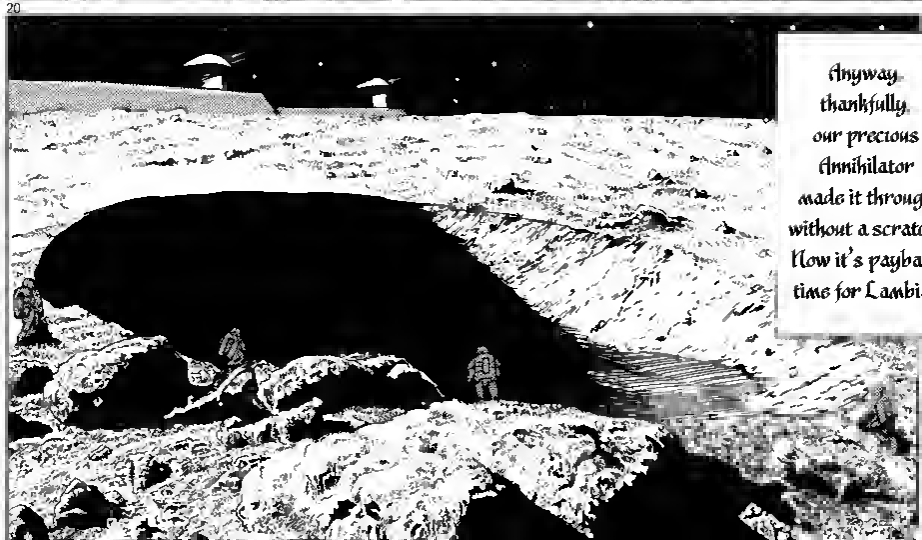
Day 9—



The area around the Seltar Moon base is a mess due to enemy attacks. The last ship in the fleet is down too. The only one who's laughing now is Kariel, who guessed the number of ships that would make it. What a ****** ******* bastard!

(Four unclear syllables)



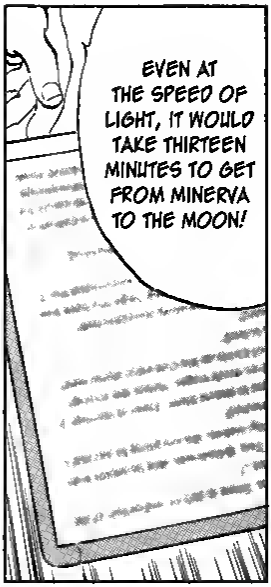


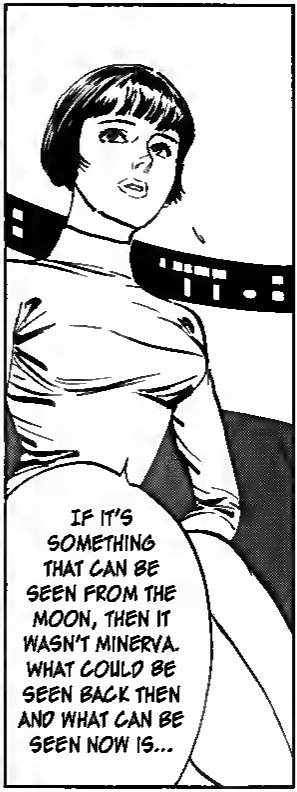
Anyway, thankfully, our precious Annihilator made it through without a scratch. Now it's payback time for Lambia!

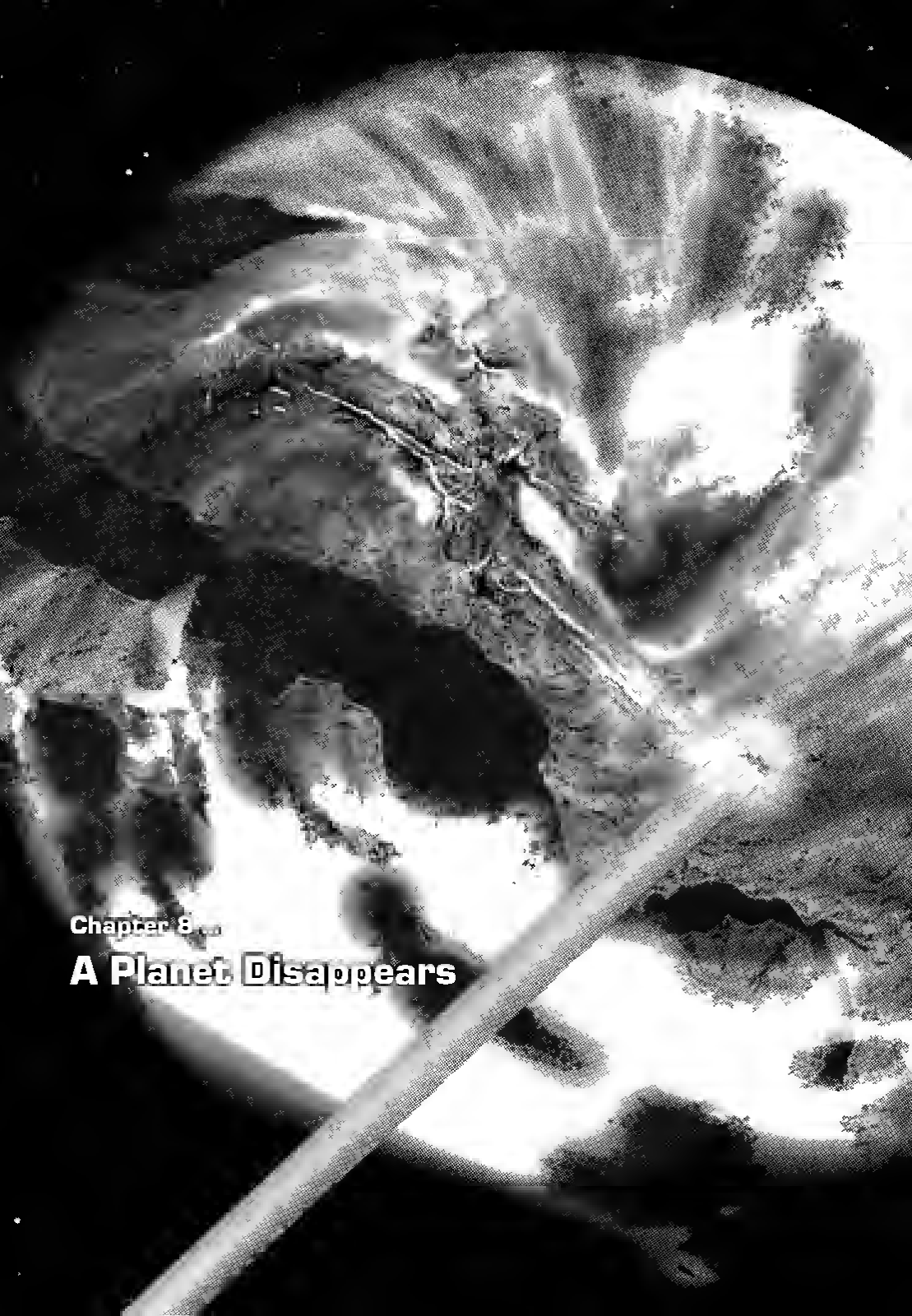
Day 10—
The enemy's been persistently bombarding us with their own Annihilator located on the planet. Things are desperate! We're just about managing to protect the base with the disbursement beam, but we're fast reaching our limit.
Day 11—
Today's the day! It's now or never!!
We set our Annihilator to the maximum charge, and it's an all-or-nothing bet against the enemy's defences...!!

Four minutes after the shot, we received a news from Command that Lambia had been destroyed. Everyone burst into cheers. We've won!
And we did it! The thick beam from the Annihilator struck home on the central headquarters of Lambia. We watched as the whole area blackened to a crisp! Some of the women were crying in relief.

I DON'T CARE WHAT KIND OF A SUPERWEAPON THAT ANNIHILATOR IS, BUT THERE'S NO WAY ANYTHING CAN MOVE FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR NEWS FROM COMMAND TO REACH THE MOON IN JUST FOUR MINUTES AFTER FIRING!
NOT TO MENTION YOU CAN'T SEE THE SURFACE OF MINERVA FROM THE MOON WITH YOUR NAKED EYE. THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!


EVEN AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, IT WOULD TAKE THIRTEEN MINUTES TO GET FROM MINERVA TO THE MOON!


IF IT'S SOMETHING THAT CAN BE SEEN FROM THE MOON, THEN IT WASN'T MINERVA. WHAT COULD BE SEEN BACK THEN AND WHAT CAN BE SEEN NOW IS...



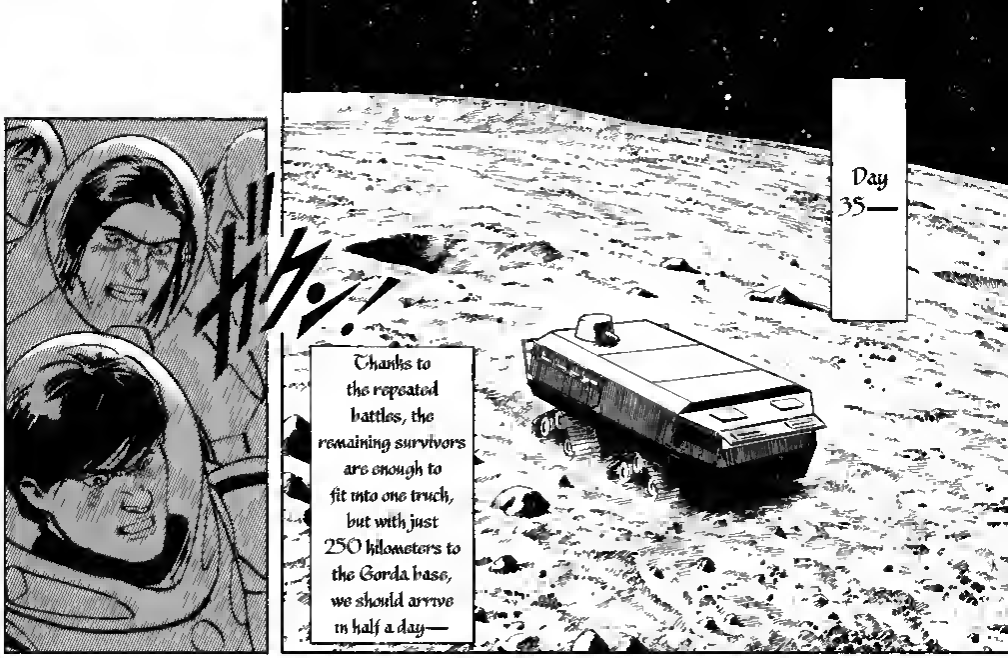
Chapter 8...

A Planet Disappears

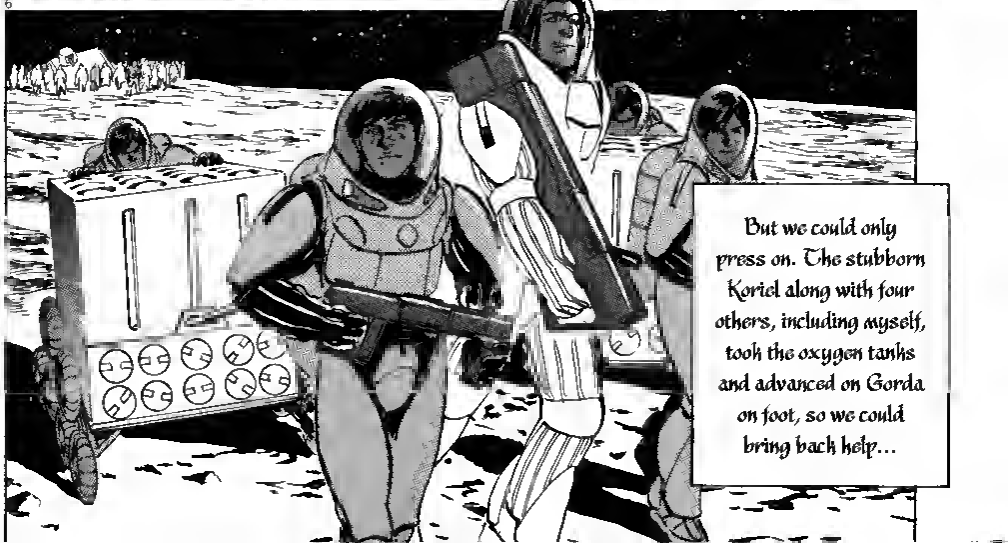
However, the Lambian army have not given up the fight.
Day 17— Strategically, it was a clear-cut victory for us Corians once we destroyed the enemy's headquarters on the main planet with the Annihilator...
There are about 2,000 enemy troops left on the Moon, and the battle of attrition continues. We've lost all functionality in our Seltar base...

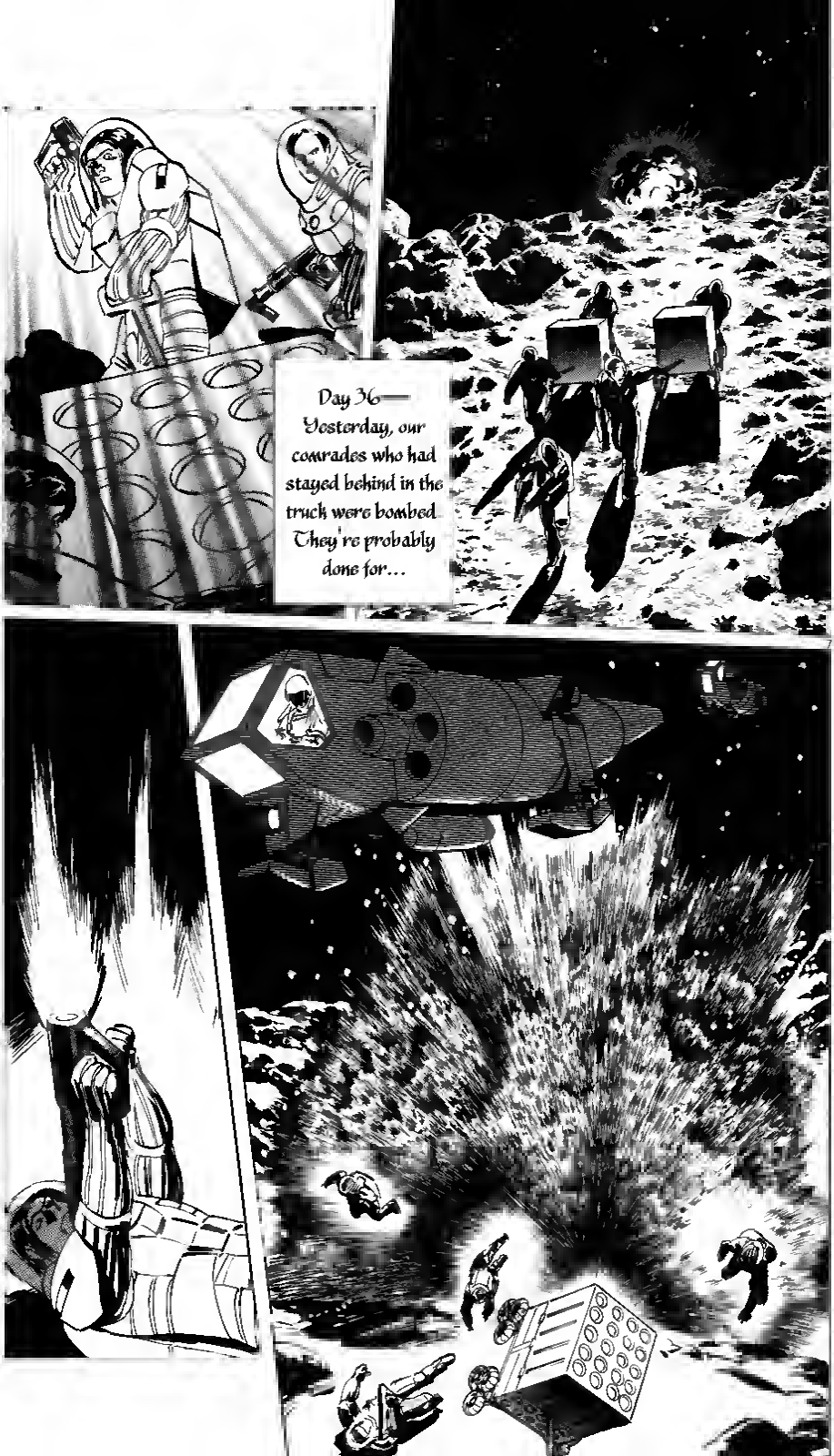
After some discussion, it was concluded that it wasn't possible to check on Gorda, with a good half of the soldiers down with injuries. Even by car, it was at least twenty days' travel away.
As the communications antennae was destroyed, we've lost all contact with our headquarters on the main planet and the other Lunar base, Gorda, is not responding.
If all went well, we would get reinforcements from Gorda, but even Koriel wasn't betting on that happening any time soon...

Day 26—
The Lambian army attached again. We lost half our vehicles and also the lives of a hundred more soldiers.


Day 35—
Thanks to the repeated battles, the remaining survivors are enough to fit into one truck, but with just 250 kilometers to the Gorda base, we should arrive in half a day—

The vehicle was damaged when it got stuck in a crater— It won't go any further. Now that it's 250 kilometers on foot, it's become ridiculous far...

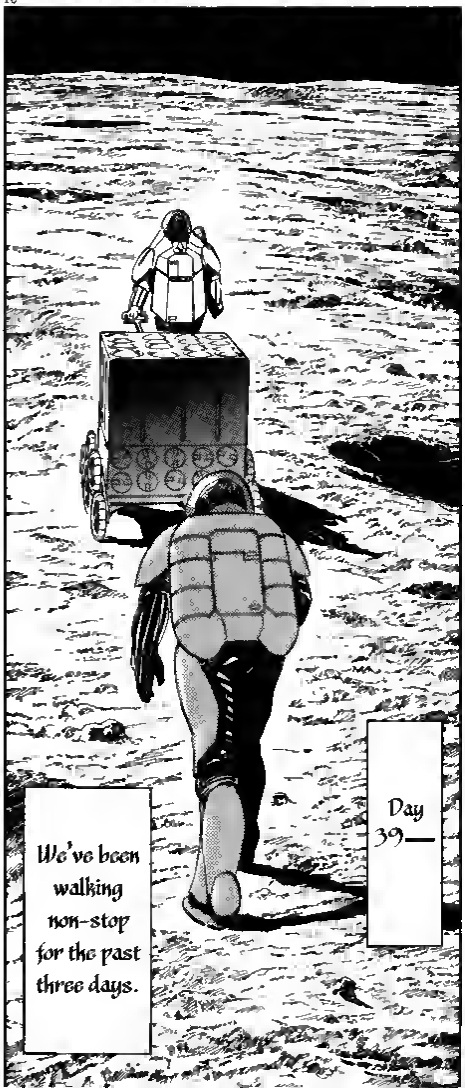

But we could only press on. The stubborn Koriel along with four others, including myself, took the oxygen tanks and advanced on Gorda on foot, so we could bring back help...

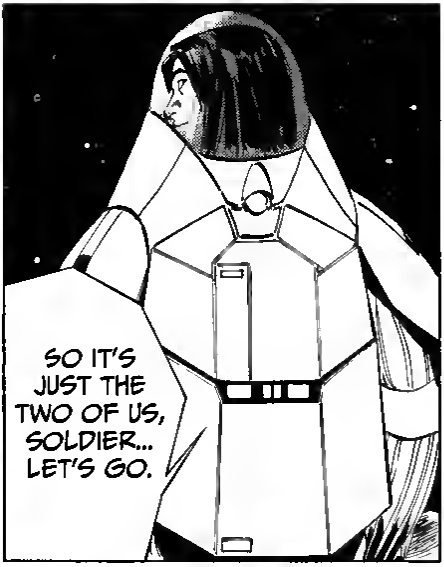

Day 36—
Yesterday, our comrades who had stayed behind in the truck were bombed. They're probably done for...

YOU LAMBIAN BAS- TARDS!

I'LL KILL YOU ALL...!!
W... WE WON'T LET YOU CERIANS WIN!
AND EVEN IF LAMBIA IS DEFEATED—
THEN I'LL ACTIVATE THE OBLITERATOR... AND DESTROY EVERYTHING!
EVERY-THING... LAMBIA... CERIOS...

...A WOMAN...? OBLITERATOR—?


We've been walking non-stop for the past three days.
Day 39—


SO IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US, SOLDIER... LET'S GO.

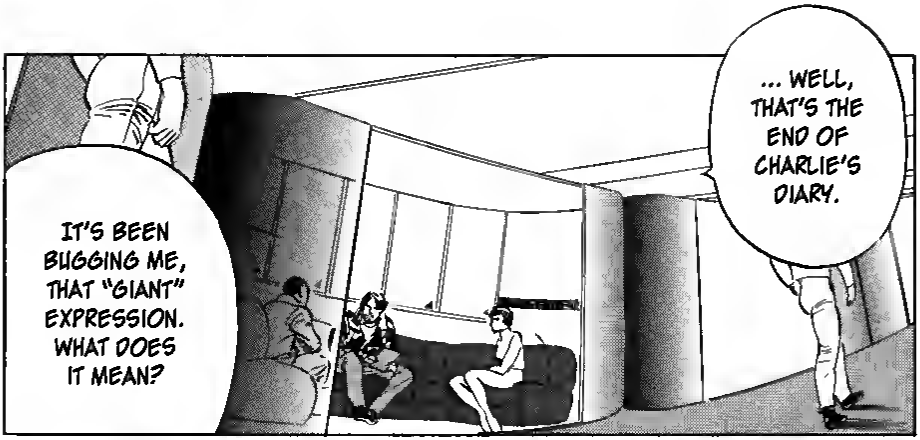
My heater started acting up yesterday and my feet have lost all sensation due to the cold—
Come to think of it, it's been like this for ages. Trudging on and on while being frozen to the core...
And at some point, he took the lead...

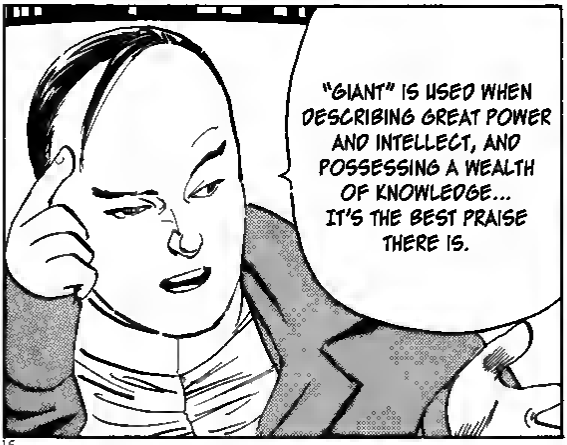
A world full of air, water and food...
Ahead of us is that warm third planet waiting for us...

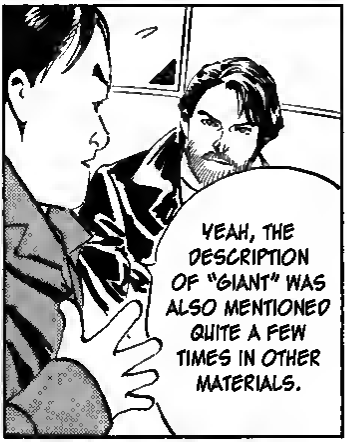
REST A LITTLE HERE, SOLDIER...

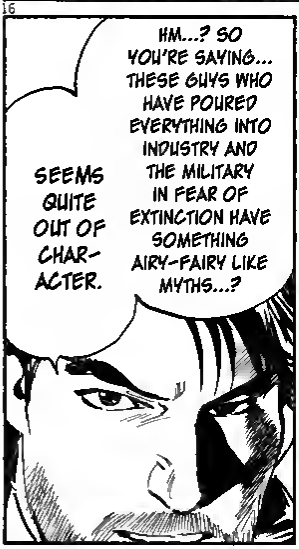
I'LL LEAVE SOME OXYGEN TANKS AND FOOD SUPPLIES HERE.
GO CALL FOR HELP AT THE GORDA BASE. C'MON, DON'T LEAVE THEM WAITING...
KORIEL, FORGET ABOUT ME. YOU CAN'T STAY HERE FOREVER...
THANKS... YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GIANT IN MY EYES.

I'LL BE BACK. WAIT FOR ME, SOLDIER!!
YOU MUSTN'T GIVE UP! THAT'S NO GOOD. YOU HAVE TO HANG ON A WHILE.


IT'S BEEN BUGGING ME, THAT "GIANT" EXPRESSION. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
... WELL, THAT'S THE END OF CHARLIE'S DIARY.


"GIANT" IS USED WHEN DESCRIBING GREAT POWER AND INTELLECT, AND POSSESSING A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE... IT'S THE BEST PRAISE THERE IS.

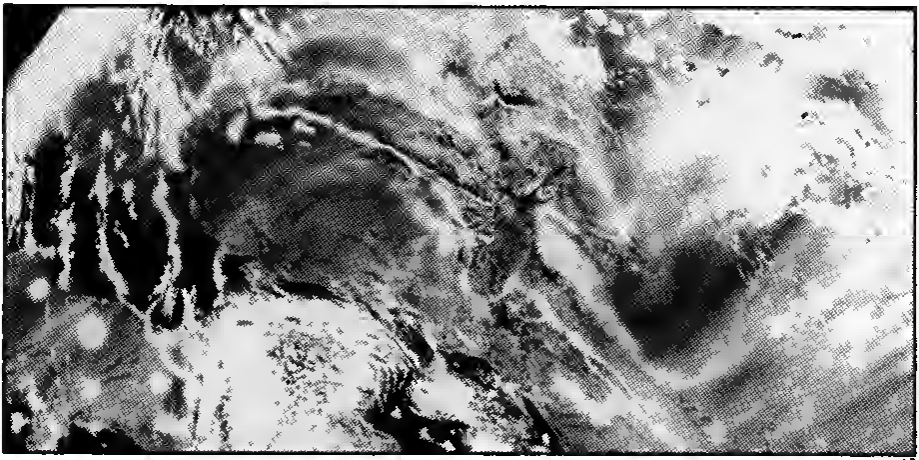

YEAH, THE DESCRIPTION OF "GIANT" WAS ALSO MENTIONED QUITE A FEW TIMES IN OTHER MATERIALS.


HM...? SO YOU'RE SAYING... THESE GUYS WHO HAVE POURED EVERYTHING INTO INDUSTRY AND THE MILITARY IN FEAR OF EXTINCTION HAVE SOMETHING AIRY-FAIRY LIKE MYTHS...?
SEEMS QUITE OUT OF CHAR-ACTER.

THEY MIGHT BE EQUIVALENT TO OUR GODS AND MYTHS.

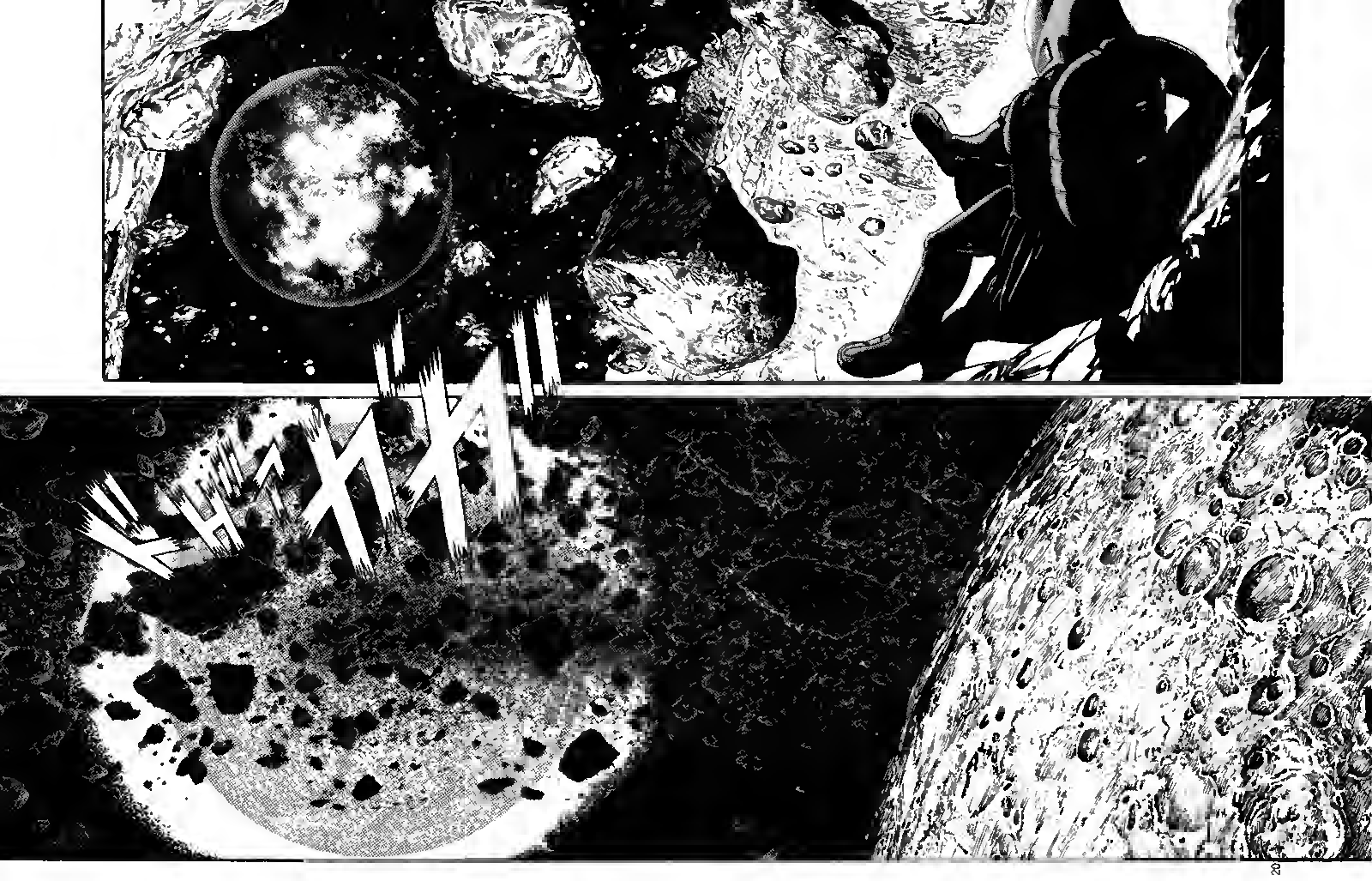
BUT THERE ARE ALSO EXPRESSIONS LIKE "BACK TO THE YEAR OF THE GIANTS" OR "BEFORE THE GIANTS LEFT FROM THE WORLD".

BEFORE THE GIANTS LEFT FROM THE WORLD, HUH...?



It makes me wonder where or how our descendants would live from here on...
Today, missiles from both camps are still firing at each other, burning up the country...
Our mother planet is burning...
That's...?

The Oblitera-tor...!?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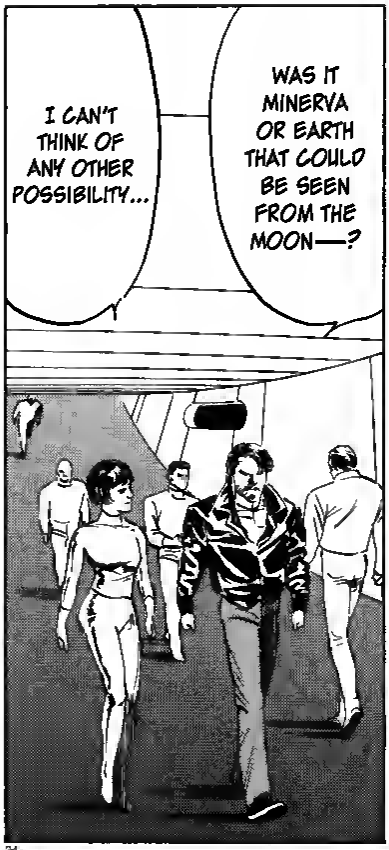
THE OBLITORATOR— WE'RE HYPOTESIZING IT'S A MAN-MADE BLACK HOLE...
MAN-MADE BLACK HOLE...
NO MATTER HOW MANY HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS OF SUPERPOWERED NUCLEAR BOMBS YOU COLLECT, YOU CAN'T BLOW UP A PLANET INTO SMITHEREENS.
AND EVEN IF YOU MANAGED TO DO THAT, YOU STILL WON'T BE ABLE TO WIPE IT FROM EXISTENCE.
WELL, IT'S LIKE THIS...

FOR A PLANET OF THIS SIZE, EVEN IF YOU BLASTED IT TO PIECES, THE DEBRIS WOULD ACCUMULATE BACK WHERE IT WAS DUE TO GRAVITATIONAL PULL.
SURE, YOU MIGHT LOSE SOME OF THE DEBRIS, BUT YOU WOULD STILL END UP WITH A BODY OF ALMOST THE SAME MASS. IT WON'T BE 'OBLITERATED'.
22
THE ULTIMATE BOMB.
I'M SURE THERE SHOULD BE SOME KIND OF PARTICLE ACCELERATOR ON THE PLANET THAT MADE MICRO BLACK HOLES.
HOWEVER, MINERVA'S GONE WITHOUT A TRACE—

A SUPER SHORT-LIVED BLACK HOLE WOULD SWALLOW UP ALMOST THE ENTIRE PLANET IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, AND ONCE IT HITS ITS LIMIT, IT VANISHES...
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THIS BODY ONCE THE PLANET HAS BEEN OBLITERATED...?
LET'S SAY... SUPPOSE THERE WAS A BODY AROUND THE SIZE OF THE MOON ORBITING MINERVA...



BUT THIS IS SERIOUSLY MIND-BLOWING— THIS IS SOMETHING THAT NO ONE HAS EVER EVEN DREAMED ABOUT, SOMETHING THAT WILL TURN THE WORLD ON ITS HEAD...!!

Inherit the Stars Volume 1 (End)

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

星を継ぐもの01

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